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# THE
# GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

# THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

EDITED BY THE REV.

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EDITOR OF "THE EXPOSITORY TIMES" "THE DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE" "THE DICTIONARY OF CHRIST AND THE GOSPELS" AND "THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS"

## PSALM CXIX. to SONG OF SONGS

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## The Light of God's Word.

**Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,**
**And light unto my path.—Ps. cxix. 105.**

1. This psalm is a hymn in praise of the Mosaic Law, which, either as God's law, or His statutes, or His commandments, or His testimonies, or His precepts, or His ceremonies, or His truth, or His way, or His righteousness, is referred to in every single verse of it except two. There is not much reason for doubting that it was written quite at the close of the Jewish Captivity in Babylon by some pious Jew who had felt all the unspeakable bitterness of the Exile, the insults and persecution of the heathen, the shame, the loss of heart, the "trouble above measure" which that compulsory sojourn in the centre of debased Eastern heathendom must have meant for him. The writer was a man for whom sorrow did its intended work, by throwing him back upon God, His ways, and His will; and so in this trouble, when all was dark around, and hope was still dim and distant, and the heathen insolent and oppressive, and the temptations to religious laxity or apostasy neither few nor slight, he still could say, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path."

2. The witness of the captive Jew who wrote the psalm, thinking only of the Mosaic Law, has been echoed again and again by Christians, with reference to the whole Bible—both the Old Testament and the New—and in a deeper sense. They have found this book a lamp unto their feet, and light unto their path. They have found that the two parts of the verse are not different ways of saying the same thing. The Word of God is a lamp or lantern to the feet by night; it is a light, as that of the sun, by day. It makes provision for the whole of life; it is the secret of life's true sunshine; it is the guide when all around is dark. It thus throws light on the "path" and the "feet," on the true

course which thought and conduct should follow, and on the efforts which are necessary to that end. With the Word of God at hand, we should be in no doubt about the greatest practical question with which man has to deal: the true road to everlasting happiness in another life.

## I.

### The Function of the Bible.

1. The text aptly describes the true function of the Holy Scriptures for the Christian soul. Their use in the first instance is practical, not speculative. It is in the earnest, devotional study of the Bible that we may look to obtain light. This is the use of it which all alike must make, whether child or peasant or philosopher, if they will become "wise unto salvation." The Bible was designed to be to us in our journey through life what a lantern is to a wayfarer who would pass in safety along a dangerous pathway during a dark night. He wants the light to fall upon the ground over which he must walk at each successive step. The illustration is simple enough, but not so the carrying out of the principle with which it deals. The ease or difficulty will vary with the disposition of those who use the Bible. They who seek to know the truth that they may walk in it, who would know the will of God that they may do it, shall never lack the light; they will both perceive and know what things they ought to do. On the other hand, those who do not strive by God's help to live up to the light which they have, those who know what they ought to do and do not make the honest effort to do it, those who shrink from knowing their duty, or wish to get it altered—to such the sacred oracles give no message; no light from God's Word will fall upon their path. Such persons are like Saul, whom the Lord would not answer by Urim and Thummim. Let us but will to do God's will, and we shall never lack guidance in the way of duty.

¶ The Society of Illuminating Engineers and others too have long sought for a light which would, by excluding the ultra-violet rays, become fog-penetrating. An inventor has just made the desired discovery, and produced an electric lamp which can penetrate the densest fog. The Bible in the world of the soul is

such a lamp. It is effective alike by what it includes and by what it excludes. The sincere, prayerful student of the sacred page will find his way through black and blinding illusions and delusions. Let me use it as "a lamp to my *feet*" for practical, personal uses; not as a Chinese lantern, engaging the fancy by virtue of its artistry and imagery, but as a signal lamp on the railway, a Davy lamp in the mine, an electric lamp in the fog. And the more we apply the sacred truths to action and experience, the more precious and luminous do they become. "The man who insists upon seeing with perfect clearness before he acts never acts," writes Amiel; but, bringing the statutes, commandments, and promises to bear on life, they become ever clearer, and more fully evince their divinity.[1]

¶ Let no man confound the voice of God in His Works with the voice of God in His Word; they are utterances of the same infinite heart and will; they are in absolute harmony; together they make up "that undisturbèd song of pure concent"; one "perfect diapason"; but they are distinct; they are meant to be so. A poor traveller, "weary and waysore," is stumbling in unknown places through the darkness of a night of fear, with no light near him, the everlasting stars twinkling far off in their depths, and the yet unrisen sun, or the waning moon, sending up their pale beams into the upper heavens, but all this is distant and bewildering for his feet, doubtless better much than outer darkness, beautiful and full of God, if he could have the heart to look up, and the eyes to make use of its vague light; but he is miserable, and afraid, his next step is what he is thinking of; a lamp secured against all winds of doctrine is put into his hands, it may in some respects widen the circle of darkness, but it will cheer his feet, it will tell them what to do next. What a silly fool he would be to throw away that lantern, or draw down the shutters, and make it dark to him, while it sits, "i' the centre and enjoys bright day," and all upon the philosophical ground that its light was of the same kind as the stars, and that it was beneath the dignity of human nature to do anything but struggle on and be lost in the attempt to get through the wilderness and the night by the guidance of those "natural" lights, which, though they are from heaven, have so often led the wanderer astray. The dignity of human nature indeed! Let him keep his lantern till the glad sun is up, with healing under his wings. Let him take good heed to the "sure" λόγον while in this αὐχμηρῷ τοπῷ—this dark, damp, unwholesome place, "till the day dawn and φωσφόρος—the day-star—arise."[2]

[1] W. L. Watkinson. [2] Dr. John Brown, *Horæ Subsecivæ*, ii. 470.

2. If it be the case that, in a great proportion of cases, the Bible fails of its true purpose, and men read it, if at all, without securing the gift which it is meant to bestow, what is the reason? The answer is, that certain conditions are attached to the guiding and illuminating office of the Bible, and that, if it fails to guide and enlighten, these conditions are not complied with. What are they? One important condition is that the Bible should be diligently searched for those truths, those precepts, those examples, which will directly guide us through life to our eternal home. But, in order to succeed in this search for the true import of Scripture, we need method, order, regularity, purpose in reading it. Just as a single purpose in life, steadily pursued, lights up surrounding interests, and quickens energy for a hundred objects besides itself, so, in reading the Bible, the mental intentness which is necessary to the steady pursuit of one truth sheds rays of intelligence on other truths which sparkle around it. The keen searcher for diamonds tells us that he often finds, over and above that for which he is looking, crystals and precious stones which intrude themselves on his gaze in the course of his search.

¶ In joy and sorrow, in health and in sickness, in poverty and in riches, in every condition of life, God has a promise stored up in His Word for you. If you are impatient, sit down quietly and commune with Job. If you are strong-headed, read of Moses and Peter. If you are weak-kneed, look at Elijah. If there is no song in your heart, listen to David. If you are a politician, read Daniel. If you are getting sordid, read Isaiah. If you are chilly, read of the beloved disciple. If your faith is low, read Paul. If you are getting lazy, study James. If you are losing sight of the future, read in Revelation of the promised land.[1]

3. The Word of God is a light to us, not because we say so, but when we carefully observe everything on which its rays are falling—the path we tread, the objects we pass, the companions of our journey, the view it gives us of ourselves—and when we forthwith rouse ourselves into action. An example which we have striven to follow, a precept which we have honestly endeavoured to obey, and which is by the effort indented on the soul, means much more than it could have meant if we had read

[1] D. L. Moody.

it with cheap admiration and passed on. Just so far as the will is exerted in order to make truth practically our own, does truth become to us present and real; not merely a light without, but a light within us; a light transferred from the pages of the Bible to the inner sanctuary in which conscience treasures up its guiding principles; a light which illuminates the humblest path with the radiance of the just, "shining more and more unto the perfect day." The clearest evidence of the divinity of the Book is to be derived from personal experience, the inward sense of its power—a kind of witness that admits of daily renewal and lies within the reach of any thoughtful and devout reader. Only let Holy Scripture have its assigned place in the regulation of conduct and life, and the supernatural element in its composition will for certain come to light. Christ made the experimental to be the supreme test or line of proof: "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself" (John vii. 17).

¶ In another letter to an old pupil, full of profound ethical and spiritual counsel, Miss Pipe writes: "*Do thy work*, and leave sorrow and joy to come of themselves. Do not limit the work to the outward activities of life. By work I mean not these only, though these certainly, but also the regulation of our moral feelings,—strive against pride, vanity, ostentation, self-righteousness, self-satisfaction and dissatisfaction, resentment, impatience, alienation, discontent, indolence, peevishness, hatred or dislike, inconstancy, cowardice,—untiring, hopeful effort after obedience to the will of God, and resolute, believing war with every temper contrary to the mind of Christ. It can be done, and it must be done. It is promised: it is commanded: it is possible. If you wish for something that you may not lawfully grasp, or cannot grasp, begin to fight, and never leave off until the wish is mastered and annihilated as completely as if it had never been once felt. This must be done not by desperate struggling so much as by calm, resolved, fixed faith. Do thus thy work, and leave sorrow and joy to come of themselves. . . . *You* see to obedience, faith and righteousness. *God* will give you peace and joy in such measure as He pleases, and in increasing measure as the years go by. Until I was five or six and twenty, I think I had no peace or joy *at all.* Indeed, I never found any until I had given up caring for, praying for, hoping for, or in any way seeking after, comfort and feeling. I took up with just an

historical faith in the Bible and said: He will not make me glad, but He shall not find me, therefore, swerve from following Him. I will do His holy will so far as I can, I will serve Him as well as I can, though not perhaps so well as others to whom the joy of the Lord gives strength. I will be content to do without these inward rewards, but with or without such wages I will do my best work for the Master. With this resolve, arrived at after years of weary strife, rest began for me, and deepened afterwards into peace, and heightened eventually into joy, and now from year to year, almost from week to week, an ever greatening blessedness." [1]

## II.

### The Right Use of the Bible.

1. If the Bible, then, is to do its work, we must be careful to act upon each truth which it teaches us as we learn it. For there is one great difference between moral or religious knowledge on the one hand and purely secular knowledge on the other, a difference which we cannot lay too closely to heart. It is that, while secular knowledge is, as a rule, remembered until the memory decays, moral and religious knowledge is soon forgotten if it is not acted on. The reason for this is that in the one case the will is interested, and in the other it is not. The will is interested in our losing sight, as soon as may be, of a precept which we disobey, or of a doctrine which we have professed, but which we feel condemns us; and so the will exerts a steady, secret pressure upon the intellect, a pressure which anticipates the ordinary decomposition and failure of memory, and extrudes the unwelcome precept or doctrine, gradually but surely, from among the subjects which are present to thought.

¶ When the Duke of Wellington accepted the commission to form a Government in 1834, it was resolved to prorogue Parliament, and Lord Lyndhurst was desired by the King to go to Lord Grey and tell him such was his pleasure. Lyndhurst forgot it! In after-times, those who write the history of these days will probably discuss the conduct of the great actors, and it will not fail to be matter of surprise that such an obvious expedient was not resorted to in order to suspend violent discussions. Among

[1] A. M. Stoddart, *Life and Letters of Hannah E. Pipe*, 119.

the various reasons that will be imagined and suggested, I doubt if it will occur to anybody that the real reason was that it was *forgotten*.[1]

2. The many-sidedness of the Bible, its immense resources, the great diversity of its contents and character, its relations with ages so wide apart as are the age of Moses and the age of St. Paul, its vast stores of purely antiquarian lore, its intimate bearings upon the histories of great peoples in antiquity, of which independently we know not a little, such as the Egyptians and the Assyrians, the splendour and the pathos of its sublime poetry—all these bristle with interest for an educated man, whether he be a good man or not. The Bible is a storehouse of literary beauties, of historical problems, of materials for refined scholarship and the scientific treatment of language, of different aspects of social theories or of the philosophy of life. A man may easily occupy himself with one of these subjects for a whole lifetime and never approach the one subject which makes the Bible what it is. And, indeed, much of the modern literature about the Bible is no more distinctly related to religion than if it had been written about Homer, or Herodotus, or Shakespeare. It deals only with those elements of the Bible which the Bible has in common with other and purely human literature; it treats the Bible as literature simply, and not as the vehicle of something which distinguishes it altogether from all merely human books. And, therefore, a serious effort is needed to set these lower aspects and interests of the Bible sufficiently aside in order to study its true and deepest meaning—the message which it conveys from God to the soul of man.

¶ There is a story told of a man crossing a mountain in Carnarvonshire one stormy night. It was so cold that in order to shelter his hands from the biting wind, he put the lantern under his cloak, and as the moon shone dimly through the clouds he thought he could trace his way without the lantern. All at once a gust of wind blew aside his cloak; the light shone forth, and suddenly revealed the edge of a large slate quarry, over which, in another moment, he would have fallen and have been dashed to pieces. He soon retraced his steps, but he did not hide the lantern under his cloak that night again. There are many who think that they

[1] *The Greville Memoirs*, iii. 50.

can go through life—dark and dangerous as the way often is—without this lamp of God's truth; they therefore hide it out of sight, or neglect to trim it by constant and prayerful study. In many instances they do not find out their mistake and folly until it is too late. Others have had this light unexpectedly cast upon their path, to reveal to them some great danger; thus their steps have been suddenly arrested, and they have learnt never to try to do without that light again.[1]

3. God hides Himself from those who would saunter with easy off-handedness through the pages of the Bible, as though they were taking a stroll up and down a back garden, and languidly noting the Immensities as if they were daisies or dandelions growing on either side of the path; as though, forsooth, nothing was so easy of comprehension at a glance as the Self-unveiling of the Eternal Mind! No, we find in the Bible what we seek in it: we find that which we can find as well in other literatures if that is all for which we search; but we find depths and heights, glories and abysses, which language can but suggest, and thought can but dimly perceive, if we are indeed, and with earnest prayer, seeking Him whose Word the Bible is. Only to those who sincerely desire and labour to have it so, is the Bible a lamp unto the feet, and light unto the path. The Bible was given us by God to shed light on the purity and vileness of our souls, to brace our wills in the hour of temptation, to elevate our thoughts amid the strife for bread, to lift our drowsy eyes to the sunlit summits of faith and prayer, and to send a thrill of Divine aspiration through lives that are ever becoming stupefied amid the murky damps of life's low levels. If we seek for a spirit of uncompromising and ringing righteousness that shall keep us from making a truce with wrong, we find it in the pages of Jeremiah. If we look for a valuation of life that puts first things first, we follow St. Paul over mountains and seas, and hear him say, "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy." If we look for a pattern of a life truly Divine, and wish to see what God would do if He were a man, we walk with Christ around the Sea of Galilee. Indeed, it is in the light of His character that we interpret the whole Book.

[1] D. Davies, *Talks with Men, Women and Children*, i. 114.

¶ When a man holds out his lantern, and asks you if there is a light in it, you may be able to convince him that there is; but the very circumstance of his asking such a question makes you fear that he is blind; and at all events five minutes of clear vision would be worth a world of your arguments. When a man asks, Do you think the Bible is inspired? Is it really the light of God which is shining there? you may prove it by unanswerable argument, and yet you cannot help regretting that he should need to appeal to others; nor can you help remembering how it stands written, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." To any one who finds himself in this predicament, the best advice we can give is, Read and pray. Pray, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." And as you pray this prayer, read the Book, and ponder its sayings; and better feelings will spring up in your mind—holy thoughts and loving, grateful thoughts towards Christ, kind thoughts towards your fellows, devout and contrite thoughts towards God. "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes"; and it opens the eyes by rejoicing the heart.[1]

## III.

### The Uniqueness of the Bible.

1. Do we value, as we ought, the priceless heritage that we have received in the Word of God? As a rule we value things just in proportion to their rarity. Many people will give fabulous sums of money for a book, a picture, a piece of china, an old article of furniture, and even a postage stamp, if it happens to be rare. But what is common, and can be purchased anywhere for a few pence, is, generally speaking, but little valued. This, it is to be feared, is too often the case with regard to the value that we put on the Bible. When copies of the Holy Scriptures were few in number and very costly, when the Bible was chained to the desk in our churches for fear that it might be stolen, people were much more eager to "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" the teaching of God's Word than they are to-day.

¶ I have been seriously perplexed to know how the religious feeling which is the essential base of conduct can be kept up with-

[1] J. Hamilton, *Works*, ii. 17.

out the Bible. By the study of what other book could children be so humanized and made to feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills like themselves but a momentary interspace between the two eternities, and earns the blessings or curses of all time according to its effort to do good and hate evil, even as they also earn it by their works?[1]

2. Other books are for special times or separate races; the Bible has been for every clime. Other books are for the poor or for the rich, the great or the obscure; this Book, ignoring the inch-high distinction of rank and wealth, regards men solely in their relationship to God as heirs of the common mysteries of life and death, of corruption and immortality. Other books are for the mature or the youthful; this Book alone neither wearies the aged nor repels the child. Other books are for the learned or the ignorant; this Book, in the sweetest and simplest elements of its revelation, is not more dear to the German philosopher than to the negro's child. In it mind becomes spontaneously luminous, heart flashes to heart with electric thrill. The North American Indian reads it in his rude wigwam on the icy coasts of Hudson's Bay; the Kaffir in his kraal, the savage of the Pacific in his coral isle, the poor old woman in the squalid slum, no less than the emperor in his royal chamber and the scholar in his college-room. And, as St. Augustine said, we shall find here what we shall not find in Plato or in Aristotle, in Seneca or Marcus Aurelius: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This Book it was that fired the eloquence of Chrysostom and St. Augustine, that inspired the immortal song of Dante and of Milton; Shakespeare and Wordsworth and Tennyson are full of it; it kindled the genius of Luther, the burning zeal of Whitefield, the bright imagination of Bunyan. With the hermits it made the wilderness blossom as the rose, with the martyrs it was as the whistling wind amidst the torturing flames; it sent the missionaries to plant the Rose of Sharon alike in the burning wastes of Africa and amid the icy hills of Nova Zembla; it inspired the pictures of Angelico and Raphael, the music of Handel and of Mendelssohn.

¶ I grant you that the Bible will have no power over my life

[1] T. H. Huxley.

if ever it ceases to command my conscience, or appeal to my judgment. It may contain passages of transcendent beauty that touch my æsthetic sense. It may arouse my curiosity by the light it sheds on the customs of strange people in the far-distant past. It may even start the tears, like the memories aroused by the sweet echoes of the prayer of a child. But its grip on my life will be gone. Of what use is a "lamp unto my feet" that goes out on the edge of the first precipice I meet? If the Bible deserves to be called "the Word of God," ought not its message to be so plain, and clear, and reliable, that all honest and earnest men who turn to its pages shall be in substantial agreement as to its teachings? I answer that it ought. I say more, it is. In all ages men have been in substantial agreement that in the pages of the Bible, if read with discrimination, we can find the true ideal of human life and character. I do not know one critic who would deny the power of its pages to quicken faith, to renew hope, to start the impulses of prayer, to thaw the frozen fountains of the affections, and to help the man of God to be "furnished unto every good work." But when men have gone to it to discover an authoritative account of the making of the mountains and the birth of the stars; when men have gone to it to cover a complete and infallible system of church polity that would lock up the Kingdom of God in a first-century mausoleum; when men have gone to it to mine out proof-texts, to bolster up a system of metaphysics and settle for ever the question between nominalism and realism, between evolution and transcendence—then they have been in a hopeless tangle of disagreement and strife.[1]

3. The lamp spoken of in the text has often been found fault with. Complaint has been made of its shape, of the media through which the light shines, of the materials of which the reflectors are made, and of the manner in which the light is supplied. The answer that the lamp gives is to shine. No modern invention has caused this lamp to be cast aside among old lumber. It is sometimes covered over with dust, but its light is so great that it pierces every obstruction, and is always sufficient to guide heavenward. An American writer tells us that, going two miles to read to a company, and at the close being about to return through a narrow path in the woods where paths diverged, he was provided with a torch of light wood or pitch pine. He objected that it was too small, weighing not over half a pound.

[1] G. H. Ferris, in *The Homiletic Review*, lx. 237.

"It will light you home," answered the host. And to all objections came, "It will light you home." So if the Bible be taken, it will be found sufficient to light us home. Some may object to this part of the Bible and others to another part; but the answer of the Bible to all objectors is, "It will light you home." This is our practical, everyday need—a light to guide us home. The stars are sublime, meteors are dazzling; but a lamp shining in a dark place is close to our practical needs. Such is the Word of God.

¶ It is the darkness which makes the lantern so welcome. And it is the darkness of the sick-room or the house of mourning in which this "Night-lamp" emits such a soft and heavenly radiance. You will find it so. Fond as you are of books, there is only one that you will value at last; with your head on the pillow you will hardly care to be told that a new history is published, or a marvellous epic. "No; read me the Twenty-third Psalm. Let me hear the fourteenth of John." When your strength sinks yet lower it will for a moment rally the worn faculties to hear the whisper, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."[1]

¶ However mingled with mystery which we are not required to unravel, or difficulties which we should be insolent in desiring to solve, the Bible contains plain teaching for men of every rank of soul and state in life, which so far as they honestly and implicitly obey, they will be happy and innocent to the utmost powers of their nature, and capable of victory over all adversities, whether of temptation or pain. Indeed, the Psalter alone, which practically was the service book of the Church for many ages, contains merely in the first half of it the sum of personal and social wisdom. The 1st, 8th, 12th, 14th, 15th, 19th, 23rd, and 24th psalms, well learned and believed, are enough for all personal guidance; the 48th, 72nd, and 75th have in them the law and prophecy of all righteous government; and every real triumph of natural science is anticipated in the 104th. For the contents of the entire volume, consider what other group of historic and didactic literature has a range comparable with it. There are—

i. The stories of the Fall and of the Flood, the grandest human traditions founded on a true horror of sin.

[1] J. Hamilton, *Works*, ii. 30.

ii. The story of the Patriarchs, of which the effective truth is visible to this day in the polity of the Jewish and Arab races.

iii. The story of Moses, with the results of that tradition in the moral law of all the civilized world.

iv. The story of the Kings—virtually that of all Kinghood, in David, and of all Philosophy, in Solomon: culminating in the Psalms and Proverbs, with the still more close and practical wisdom of Ecclesiasticus and the Son of Sirach.

v. The story of the Prophets—virtually that of the deepest mystery, tragedy, and permanent fate, of national existence.

vi. The story of Christ.

vii. The moral law of St. John, and his closing Apocalypse of its fulfilment.

Think if you can match that table of contents in any other—I do not say "book" but "literature." Think, so far as it is possible for any of us—either adversary or defender of the faith—to extricate his intelligence from the habit and the association of moral sentiment based upon the Bible, what literature could have taken its place, or fulfilled its function, though every library in the world had remained, unravaged, and every teacher's truest words had been written down.[1]

¶ No metal can compare with gold, which is of small volume, and of even quality, and easy of transport, and readily guarded, and steady in value, and divisible without loss—besides being beautiful, brilliant, and durable almost to eternity. This is why all civilized nations have adopted it as the standard by which they measure the value of every other kind of merchandise. We habitually think and speak of wealth in terms of gold. Naturally, the name of this standard metal comes to be used as a symbol or metaphor to stand for whatever we prize as most precious of its kind. There is a special sense in which the Bible deserves to be called more golden than gold, because it remains the supreme standard for the Christian Church, by comparison with which we measure and test all spiritual values. "The Bible," said Newman, "is the record of the whole revealed faith; so far all parties agree." It is the one book which preserves for us all that we certainly know about the life and words and character of Christ Himself. The teaching of the great Reformers on this matter has been summed up by a profound modern scholar, whose verdict we may venture to quote: "If I am asked why I receive Scripture as the Word of God and as the only perfect rule of faith and life, I answer with all the Fathers of the Protestant

[1] Ruskin, *Our Fathers Have Told Us*, chap. iii. § 37.

Church, Because the Bible is the only record of the redeeming love of God, because in the Bible alone I find God drawing near to man in Christ Jesus, and declaring to us in Him His will for our salvation. And this record I know to be true by the witness of His Spirit in my heart, whereby I am assured that none other than God Himself is able to speak such words to my soul."[1]

[1] T. H. Darlow, *More Golden than Gold*, 9.

# The Opening of God's Word.

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## The Opening of God's Word.

**The opening of thy words giveth light;**
**It giveth understanding unto the simple.—Ps. cxix. 130.**

1. The section of the psalm in which the text occurs is a gem of spiritual beauty. In verse after verse we are led through the deep places of religious faith and love, and the Psalmist guides our feet like one conversant with the holiest secrets of the spiritual pilgrim's way. His thoughts are perennial, and his words sound like the utterance of a believing soul here and now in this present generation.

"God's word is wonderful, mysterious." It holds a great mystery which is an offence to the pretentious intellectualism of the wise, but in this very wonderfulness the obedient soul finds rest. Through obedience comes fuller knowledge. "God's word opens." And fuller knowledge creates fuller trust and devotion. For "the light grows with the opening of the word," and in it there is no darkness at all. New light produces new longing, a more eager "panting" of the spirit for the word of God. The longing for God's word quickly reveals itself as a longing for God Himself, a hungering for His mercy and love. In the vision of God's face the desire for purity of life is intensified and the soul pleads for deliverance from the "dominion of iniquity." Then the man rises into full consciousness of his privilege as one of God's freemen, whom no power shall enslave and no fetters shall bind. "The oppression of man shall not hold him in bondage." And so he stands in the gladness of spiritual strength while God's face "shines upon him" like the sun from heaven. Living in God's light, his heart, like God's, becomes full of compassion for a sinful world. As the Son of God in later days wept for the sins and woes of Jerusalem, so this ancient Psalmist says: "Mine eyes run down with rivers of water, because they observe not thy law."

2. The object of Christian faith may be compared to a jewel enclosed in a casket. The jewel is the Lord Jesus Christ; the casket is the Bible. Now, we believe that a man may possess the jewel who has never seen the casket, or who has got it in his hands in an imperfect and broken form. There is such an efficacy in the Lord Jesus Christ, such a fitness in Him for the sins and sorrows and wants of poor fallen humanity, that the Holy Spirit of God can bring Him home to the soul with saving power by a small portion of knowledge. A single Gospel, a single Epistle, a Psalm such as the Twenty-third, or a verse such as "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," if explained simply and brought home by God's Spirit, may become God's power unto salvation. The Bible came to men in fragments, piece after piece, through many generations, and a fragment of it still does its proper work. It has a principle of life that is complete in its separate parts, and you may see all its truth in one text, as you can see all the sun's image in one drop of dew in a flower. This is a wise, Divine arrangement, which may reassure some who fear they are losing Christ, when the question is about the meaning of some parts of the Bible. If a man were so driven about on seas of difficulty that he could have only a board or broken piece of the ship, it would "bring him safe to land." Nevertheless, the care and completeness of the casket are of very great moment. Our salvation may be gained by one word about Christ, but our edification, our Christian comfort and well-being, depend on the full word of Christ. Whenever He is set forth, however dimly, there is something for us to learn, something needful to make us thoroughly furnished unto every good work. Here the Bible may be compared, not to a casket enclosing a jewel, but to a piece of tapestry on which a figure is inwoven. If it be mutilated, or the golden threads that meet and intermingle be torn and tarnished, we lose, so far, the complete image of truth that is the inheritance of the Church of Christ—the inheritance which the Apostle thus describes: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

¶ Bartholdi's statue of "Liberty Enlightening the World" occupies a fine position on Bedloes Island, which commands the

approach to New York Harbour. It holds up a torch which is lit at night by an immense electric light. The statue was cast in portions in Paris. The separate pieces were very different, and, taken apart, of uncouth shape. It was only when all was brought together, each in its right place, that the complete design was apparent. Then the omission of any one would have left the work imperfect. In this it is an emblem of Holy Scripture. We do not always see the object of certain portions; nevertheless each has its place, and the whole is a magnificent statue of Christ Jesus, who is the true "Liberty Enlightening the World," casting illuminative rays across the dark, rocky ocean of time, and guiding anxious souls to the desired haven.[1]

## I.

### The Light Hid.

1. The word of God is not a book. There are plenty of Bibles in the world to-day. Indeed there never was a time when so many were distributed. The printing presses of Christendom fairly groan with the innumerable volumes. Nor is the word of God preaching. Churches abound and times of prosperity see them built and rebuilt in ever more magnificent form. The greater the wealth of the community and the more easy and abundant its luxury, the more gorgeous become its churches, the more elegant their ritual, and the more eloquent their preaching. The word of God is the voice of God in a man's soul. As the Saviour put it: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." That is the voice which, through whatever channel it comes and in whatever words it declares itself, becomes the compelling voice in a man's heart, awakening him to a new consciousness of his relations to his Maker.

2. The word of God is a living word, addressed to men, and it brings the power of God Himself along with it. God did not wait to speak to men until they had advanced so far that they were able to provide themselves with some kind of record of what He said. Far back in the infancy and childhood of the human

[1] G. Jackson.

race, God condescended to men in their weakness and frailty, spoke to them and made Himself intelligible, and lodged the incorruptible seed in their hearts. All the epistles in those days were living epistles, and the living word of God was not written down, but passed like fire, with all its power to quicken and redeem, from heart to heart.

3. No book can adequately express God's word. What God had to say to men, what God at last actually did say to men, was something too great for human words to record. "God," we read in the Bible itself, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." "By his Son"—revelation was consummated in Christ. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth," and Christ, in all the fulness of His grace and truth, is God's last word to man. Could anybody produce an adequate record of Christ? Could any words that man could use ever tell all the wonderful meaning of that manifestation of God? Evangelists, after they had done their best, declared that half had never been told. You remember how the last of them, John, says at the end of his Gospel, after he had tried to tell everything: "The world itself would not contain the books that should be written." No human word, the most wonderful or searching or patient, could ever tell out for men everything that God meant when He sent His Son to save the world.

¶ You do right to call it "The Book," but you must not forget that it is a book. It has the limitations of a book, the mistakes of a book, the obscurities of a book, the impotence of a book. And while it is the treasury of the most profound and unquestionable and authoritative in books, it is still only a book. There is something more than the Book. There is a life, a living passion, a moulding faith, a lifting hope; and they are greater than the Book.[1]

¶ What is a word, a sentence, a book, a library? What are all libraries? A mere peep into the inexpressible. The best writers know this, and are not surprised if they find out their most important things in between the lines, and the best readers soon learn where to look for them. The best speakers know this,

[1] P. C. Ainsworth, *A Thornless World*, 15.

and feel when all is done that they have left their most impressive thoughts unspoken because they are unspeakable. However, the best hearers understand perfectly well, perhaps better than if they had been spoken. The poets know best how to use language. They often express their most inexpressible, or evanescent thoughts by means of repugnant, or somewhat paradoxical epithets; as, for example, Coleridge when he says:

> The stilly murmur of the distant sea
> Tells us of silence.

The belief that it is easy to speak plainly on these great subjects is at the bottom of nearly all the mistakes which divide men in religion, and, it may be added, of nearly all the scepticism which has ever existed.[1]

4. Multitudes are unconscious of the highest truths, incapable of them. They lack a sense, the sublimest sense of all, the faculty to discern the reality of the Divine and eternal. Clever enough in the arts of this life, they are stone-blind to the higher. Standing beneath the visible world, patent to us all, is an invisible underworld of atoms, ether, colours, and subtle movements, which only the disciplined sense of the scientist can detect and measure; all around us is another world of beauty, music, and poetry, perceived and appreciated only by those possessed of the artistic sense; and again, above us is a supreme world of which God is the everlasting light and glory, a realm evident only to those whose senses are exercised in holy thought, constant purity, and willing obedience.

We say that the eye creates half that it sees: but no eye is nearly so creative as a blind one; and the proud critic, knowing nothing as he ought to know, enlarges copiously and confidently on his speculations. It is the astronomy of the blind. Competent on questions of the lower spheres, these talkers are of no account in regard to the reality and blessedness of personal godliness. Their astronomy is the veriest superstition set forth in the language of philosophy. The least in the Kingdom of God is greater than these. Only men born again see the eternal light clearly and steadily. Only as we experience the truths Divine do we comprehend them. Only as we do the will of God in daily obedience do we know the doctrine. As Carlyle puts it: "He who has done nothing has known nothing." Then do we see light in God's light,

[1] S. Hall.

and know the secret of the world, of life, of the future when we believe in our heart and obey in our life.

> That Thou art nowhere to be found, agree
> Wise men, whose eyes are but for surfaces;
> Men with eyes opened by the second birth,
> To whom the seen, husk of the unseen is,
> Descry the soul of everything on earth.
> Who knows Thy ends, Thy means and motions see;
> Eyes made for glory soon discover Thee.

¶ Not very long ago *The Times* newspaper contained a correspondence on the desirableness of science lecturers making their great themes more clear to the ordinary audience. In defence the lecturers maintained that it is almost impossible to make lucid the problems of nature to listeners so entirely destitute of knowledge and sympathy as the majority are. More difficult still is it for certain minds to grasp mathematical or metaphysical problems. How completely the ungifted and undisciplined stand away from the mysteries of music! While Glinka was writing his immortal work, his wife complained before everyone that "he was wasting ruled paper." The obtuse content themselves with the sarcasm that "music is a noise costlier than other noises." And as to the arts, the critics declare that genuine work is unintelligible to the crowd. "The beautiful is what your servant instinctively thinks is frightful."[1]

## II.

### The Light Revealed.

"The opening of thy words giveth light." When the book is opened, the light streams forth. The term translated "giveth light" is a transitive verb which means "to cause to shine." The direct object of the verb may be supplied by using any term which will indicate the lover of God's word. "The opening of God's Word maketh the attentive heart to shine." That is, the Word of God gives light by enkindling the light of truth within our souls. It is the same word that is used concerning God in the 135th verse—"Make thy face to shine upon thy servant." As His face shines upon us, He makes our hearts shine back upon

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *Life's Unexpected Issues*, 27.

Him and upon the world. He does not illuminate our path mechanically, but sets His light within us livingly. He uses us, not as passive reflectors of His brightness, but as burning and shining lights.

1. We must learn to open the book. If God has given us a heavenly Word, a Divinely communicated Word, the first thing we should do is to learn diligently to understand that Word. If God has spoken, then our greatest business is to try to understand what God has said. Suppose a great prince or a great sage spoke words of wisdom, and a thoughtless, foolish person rushed in and began to babble his inanities, instead of trying to understand the wisdom of the counsellor, what would you think? You would probably think more than you would like to say. Are we any better, if, when God has spoken, and in the face of that utterance, instead of setting ourselves in lowliness to understand His great message, we go on babbling our own little passing speculations? We are people of many books to-day, and we speak of our fathers sarcastically as "men of one book." There is no objection to many books, but we would do well to get back to the one, and to understand something more of the great mystery of Divine love which God has revealed to us.

¶ Mr. Moody tells us in an amusing way of his own experience: "I used at one time to read so many chapters a day, and if I did not I thought I was cold and backsliding, but, mind you, if a man had asked me an hour afterwards what I had read, I could not have told him—I had forgotten nearly it all. When I was a boy I used to hoe turnips on a farm, and I used to hoe them so badly to get over so much ground that at night I had to put a stick into the ground so as to know next morning where I had left off." That was somewhat in the same fashion as much Bible reading. A man will say: "Wife, did I read that chapter?" "Well," she says, "I don't remember"; and neither of them can recollect. Now, there is no sort of merit or profit in that sort of Bible reading; no blessing comes with it. It is of no more use than galloping through so many columns of advertisements or so many pages of the dictionary. If the Scriptures are to profit us, we must ask, as we read, "What does this mean? What does it teach? What lesson may I learn from it? Does it suggest prayer? Does it prompt praise? Does it prescribe duty?" It would be well if all of us might sometimes be pulled

up in our reading by the question, "Understandest thou that which thou readest?"[1]

2. The more we study the Word, the more freely the light breaks upon us. "The opening of thy words giveth light" means not only that God's Word gives light, but that this light grows with the growing revelation or understanding of the Word. As the Word opens before the soul the Divine shines forth from it more clearly, and the glory of the God it exhibits becomes more wonderful. The more we understand the Word, the more we see of God. The deeper we go into the revelation, the nearer we get to the blaze of the eternal Light.

¶ A friend of mine visited Mr. Prang's chromo establishment in Boston. Mr. Prang showed him a stone on which was laid the colour for making the first impression toward producing the portrait of a distinguished public man, but he could see only the faintest possible line of tinting. The next stone that the paper was submitted to deepened the colour a little, but still no trace of the man's face was visible. Again and again was the sheet passed over successive stones, until at last the outline of a man's face was dimly discerned. Finally, after some twenty impressions from as many different stones, the portrait of the distinguished man stood forth so perfectly that it seemed to lack only the power of speech to make it living. Thus it is with Christ in the Scriptures.[2]

¶ A Hindoo gentleman, holding a high office in the Presidency of Bombay, told me a few years ago that during his vacation he was anxious to read with his son for an hour or two daily a book of high moral and spiritual influence. He thought of many, and at last decided to take the Book of Psalms. "We treat it," he said, "like any other book; we investigate questions of authorship, we try to discover the circumstances in which each psalm was written, we separate the purely Jewish elements from those of more general interest and importance, we try to discriminate between what is human and faulty, and what is lofty and spiritual. By doing this we seem often to hear the voice of God speaking in our hearts, showing us the way of truth and duty, and calling us to higher aspirations and efforts." The man who said this to me was not a Christian. It shows us what hope there is in presenting our Scriptures to non-Christians in the right way, and how true it is that these Scriptures possess a universal adaptation to the human spirit.[3]

[1] G. H. James. [2] G. Jackson. [3] A. Macarthur.

## III.

### The Light Utilized.

1. "It giveth understanding unto the simple." We all know what it means to have the intellect enlightened. Everywhere we are encountering new knowledge. The sciences are all new, the practical affairs of life are conducted on new methods, with new instruments and, we may also say, with new purposes. We live not only on a new continent, but in a veritable new world. Enlightenment of the understanding seems at times the single, all-important necessity. All our great system of schools and colleges and universities is to the one end of providing this enlightened understanding for the growing generation; and we summon the young people to every sacrifice to attain to the enlightenment which is so much needed. We are charmed when we come upon any indication of what it holds in store for them.

¶ When Professor Agassiz came to America and made his first journey westward from the sea-coast, he sat all day in the train looking out of the window, for everywhere he quickly discovered what no one else had seen—signs of the action of the great glaciers of the ice period upon the surface of the continent. Every rounded hill, every pond in Massachusetts, every undulation in the levels south of Lake Erie was to him the proof of the theory of the Ice Age as he had held it. And these indisputable signs of a great geological epoch had laid openly before the eyes of generations of men who had been blind to see them. The record of geological history was written on the very face of the continent, and up to that hour no one had read it. With what excitement he turned the leaf of the great story! With what interest he told what he saw! With what open-eyed wonder people responded to the new teaching! We want enlightened intelligence in matters of religion. There are truths as new, as important, and as interesting in regard to revelation, and in regard to the Bible. We may well pray that the Church everywhere, and all believers, may have as a gift of God, enlightenment of their understanding.[1]

¶ India has a venerable civilization, such as it is, and sacred books which contain a great deal of wisdom and beauty; but the *Light of Asia* has never brought enlightenment to the millions

[1] H. A. Stimson, *The New Things of God*, 188.

who receive it. With all the intellectual glory of ancient Greece, popular education was a thing unknown. Rome trained her people to war and plunder for the aggrandizement of the State. Certain of the slaves were educated to teach their master's sons, but the plebeian multitude were poor, ignorant, and despised. Let the intellectual status of the people of Russia, Italy, Spain, or even France be compared with that of the people in Germany, England, or the United States, and how significant are the facts which appear.[1]

2. But if we need enlightenment of the intellect, we need still more the dew of heaven upon the heart. The heart is the man, and the man must be reached if the work of God is to go forward. Sadly we discover that the enlightenment of the intellect goes but a short way in changing the character. Character rests upon decisions of the will, the abiding purposes of life, and these are determined primarily by the feelings. It is therefore the enlightenment of the heart, the stirring up of the feelings, the opening of the deep wells of the soul, and the appeal to the essential nature of the man himself that alone answers the call of God, and that alone can make men free, in the large sense of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The mere accumulation of knowledge is like the stuffing of the stove with fuel—it remains as cold and dead as the iron itself until the fire is kindled, which alone can transform it, and set free its imprisoned energies.

This is the unique triumph of God's word that it recreates the soul, and changes the unrighteous into the image of Christ. No other power on earth has been able thus to renew the spirit of man. But this word of God renews its power in every generation. Into the dark soul its light enters, and in the lowly spirit the fire of God burns with inextinguishable blaze. In God's light we see light, and the enkindled soul communes with the glory of God. In Christ Jesus the fallen one rises to be a new creation, and hears a holy voice cry, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

¶ This characteristic has been splendidly manifest in the propagation of the gospel in foreign lands. The hindrances to the exercise of this power are enormous among the devotees of false religions. Custom, tradition, sentiment, imagination, and all the

[1] S. O. Benton.

vast conservatism of social forces, are arrayed against the incoming of the light of the Gospel. The feeble groundwork of truth upon which the false superstructure is reared has an ancient influence which counts for much. Yet, wherever the Word of God gets an opportunity, its results are similar to those which we have ourselves experienced. In Africa, India, China, and the islands of the sea, men and women rise to the same childlike assurance of pardon and peace in Jesus Christ, and confess in the common language of Christian faith the light-giving and life-giving virtue of the Word of God. The people that sat in darkness have seen a great light, and that light is the Son of God.[1]

¶ The other day I was reading a story of a Frenchman who was being entertained by a Christian chief in one of the Pacific Islands. The chief had a Bible, which the Frenchman sneered at, saying that in Europe they had got past that. The chief led his guest out of the house, showed him where they used to cook and eat their meals in cannibal days, and clinched everything by saying, "My friend, if it had not been for that Book, I should have been dining upon you now."[2]

3. Understanding comes only to the simple-hearted: "Unto the simple." A simple person is often supposed to be a person who has no understanding or wisdom. But here "simple" means sincere, honest—a person who has a right aim, a right eye. What says the Saviour of such? "If thine eye be single"—rendered sometimes "simple"—if thine eye be simple, "thy whole body shall be full of light." There is the entrance of God's word. "But if thine eye be evil,"—if it be double, if it be hypocritical, if it be deceitful,—"thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness!" And how gracious it is of God, how merciful, that He should put the condition of our receiving the inward light, not upon intellectual and moral capacity. What if He had rested it on intellect, on philosophy, on science, or rank, or natural power of intellect: if He had promised it to the man who could muster different languages, or solve profound and difficult problems! But, so far from this, it is just the reverse; for this is what the Spirit of God tells us of His work, "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of

[1] J. Thomas, *Concerning the King*, 57. [2] J. R. Walker.

the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence"; and, it is added, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

¶ A teacher eminent in scientific research in describing the wondrous beauty and the mysterious structure of a leaf, has said that any tyro can see the facts for himself if he is provided with a leaf and a microscope. But how helpless would the tyro be if he had only the leaf, and not the microscope! The leaf would be perfect in all its parts, it would contain rare beauty of form, colour, and structure, though the tyro was ignorant of it, and had not a microscope to see it. Without the aid of a microscope, a scientific teacher even could not see the mysterious substance, the strange movements, and the beautiful structure of the leaf. The optical instrument is as necessary for the intelligent as for the ignorant, for the scientific as for the uneducated. If a man were to examine the leaf, without the aid of the instrument, and declare his inability to see any inner beauty, form, and structure in the leaf, the simple answer would be that these are things which can only be microscopically discerned. Now this is not merely the teaching of scientists, it is the teaching of the Apostle. Spiritual things can be seen and known only by a spiritual mind—a mind aided and strengthened by the higher power of vision which the Spirit of God imparts.[1]

¶ There was a literary woman who stood high among book critics. One day in reviewing a book she said, "Who wrote this book? It is beautifully written, but there is something wrong here and there!" She proceeded to criticize with a good deal of severity. Some months afterwards this lady became acquainted with the author of the book, fell in love, and married him. She took the same book again and said, "What a beautiful book! There are some mistakes here and there, but they ought to be overlooked." The book was just the same as it had been before, but the critic had changed. When she began to love the author it changed her attitude toward the book. So it is with us and the Bible. People do not love the Bible because they do not love Christ.[2]

[1] W. Simpson. [2] G. Jackson.

# Help from beyond the Hills.

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## HELP FROM BEYOND THE HILLS.

**I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains:**
**From whence shall my help come?**
**My help cometh from the Lord,**
**Which made heaven and earth.—Ps. cxxi. 1, 2.**

THIS psalm is one of that remarkable series of fifteen which are called, in the ancient headings of our Bibles, "Psalms of Degrees," or, as the Revised Version renders the Hebrew, "Songs of Ascents." In the ancient Greek and Latin versions of the Scriptures the rendering is, "Songs of Steps," or "of Staircases." They are psalms connected somehow with steps upward, as to a shrine; and one ancient explanation of the heading is that there were fifteen steps leading up to the "Court of Israel" in the Temple of Jerusalem, and that the fifteen Songs of Degrees have connexion with those steps, and were sung on certain ceremonial occasions on them, or while worshippers went up by them. A mystic meaning is given to the title by some of the ancient Jewish expositors. One of them sees in these psalms an allusion to the spiritual steps "on which God leads the righteous up to a blessed hereafter"; and true it is that these psalms, in a sweet way of their own, lead us to views of His Word, of His promises, and of Himself, which afford an uplifting guide and help to the pilgrim as he ascends "from strength to strength" towards the heavenly shrine. Another account of the word is that these were psalms used, not upon the steps in the Temple, but on the ascending march of pilgrims returning from exile in Babylon, or going up at the great festivals to Jerusalem from the remote parts of the Holy Land. They climbed towards the mountain throne where the City and the Temple were set, and they solaced their way with these psalms of peculiar and beautiful faith, hope, and joy, as most of them conspicuously are.

¶ These Psalms of Degrees, the Psalms from the 120th to 134th inclusive, display a certain characteristic rhythm, and they

speak a tender pathetic dialect of their own, if one may use the word; a certain uplook, almost always, as out of a felt need to the ever-present Lord, seems to be the deepest inspiration of the song. This Psalm, assuredly, the 121st, is "a Song of Ascents," a song of up-goings, a song befitting the heart which believes and loves, on its way to the eternal Zion. The whole direction of it is upwards, God-wards. It is, in the language of the Communion Service, a *Sursum corda*, a "Lift up your hearts; we lift them up unto the Lord." Shall we describe the Psalm in few and simple words? It is the soul's look, out from itself, and up to its all-sufficient God, under a sense of complete need, and with the prospect of a complete supply.

> My need and Thy great fulness meet,
> And I have all in Thee.[1]

¶ The speaker, as we take it, was one of the Jews in Babylon. Under the hand of a tyrant and among heathen, neither day nor night, in going out or coming in, was he safe. Evening by evening, therefore, he put himself anew into a keeping that could not fail. Ever as the time came for the altar smoke to rise on Mount Zion did he come forth into the open. The great plain, arched by the great sky, was his temple: and Jehovah, the Lord of heaven and earth, was there. Nevertheless, his heart yearned towards the Holy of Holies, God's chosen spot, and he turned his face to it. As he closed his eyes to pray, he saw the blue hills of Judah and the towers that crowned the Holy House. He sent his cry for mercy to the Mercy Seat. His help would come from beyond the hills, even from the Glory between the cherubim.[2]

¶ When I lived at Oxford, a good many years ago, one of the tutors lay dying of a cancerous disease. It was a summer of perfect warmth and beauty, and every meadow was as a haunt of dreams. But the dying man was a native of Iceland, and amid all the glory of those days, the cry on his lips was to get back to Iceland, just that he might see the snow again. That same feeling breathes in this verse "I to the hills will lift mine eyes." The writer was an exile, far from home; he was in a land where everything was strange. And what did it matter to him though Babylonia was fairer than the country of his birth! The hills of his homeland were calling him.[3]

[1] H. C. G. Moule, *Thy Keeper*, 8.
[2] D. Burns, *The Song of the Well*, 65.
[3] G. H. Morrison, *The Return of the Angels*, 98.

## I.

### The Call of the Hills.

**"I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains."**

1. The hills that the Psalmist was thinking about were visible from no part of that long-extended plain where he dwelt; and he might have looked till he wore his eyes out, ere he could have seen them on the horizon of sense. But although they were unseen, they were visible to the heart that longed for them. He directed his desires farther than the vision of his eyeballs can go. Just as his possible contemporary, Daniel, when he prayed, opened his window towards the Jerusalem that was so far away; and just as Mohammedans still, in every part of the world, when they pray, turn their faces to the Kaaba at Mecca, the sacred place to which their prayers are directed; and just as many Jews still, north, east, south or west though they be, face Jerusalem when they offer their supplications — so this Psalmist in Babylon, wearied and sick of the low levels that stretched endlessly and monotonously round about him, says, "I will look at the things that I cannot see, and lift up my eyes above these lownesses about me, to the loftinesses that sense cannot behold."

¶ The eyes that the Psalmist speaks of are the eyes of the soul, and the hills to which he looks are the hills of help for the soul. Our souls relate us to the world of the soul, as our senses relate us to the world of the senses. The soul's faculty of faith is to our eternal nature what our senses are to our temporal nature. And as the evidence of the senses puts an end to all strife about the things presented to them, so faith gives restful assurance with respect to the objects of belief. Faith is that faculty of pure reason with which the soul of all the senses is endowed. The assurance of faith is, therefore, not the assurance of one but of all our faculties in that ground of our nature which unites all our powers. The assurance of faith is the assurance of seeing, of hearing, of tasting, of handling—all in one and at once. The Psalmist is fully assured as to the hills of help to which he lifts up his eyes. He only speaks of what he sees with "the eyes of his heart"; for it is "with the heart man believes" and looks at spiritual things.[1]

[1] W. Pulsford.

¶ Ruskin, in his *Modern Painters*, has called attention to a suggestive fact. It is that the greatest painters of the Holy Family have always a hint of the mountains in the distance. You might have looked for cornfield or for vineyard, or for some fine pleasant garden sleeping in the sunshine; but in the greatest painters *that* you never find; it is "I to the hills will lift mine eyes." What they felt was, with one of these intuitions which are the birthright and the seal of genius—what they felt was that for a secular subject vineyard and meadow might be a fitting background; but for the Holy Family, and for the Child of God, and for the love of heaven incarnate in humanity, you want the mystery, the height, the depth, which call to the human spirit from the hills. It is not to man as a being with an intellect that the hills have spoken their unvarying message. It is to man as a being with a soul, with a cry in his heart for things that are above him. That is why Zeus in the old Pagan days came down to speak to men upon Mount Ida. That is why Genius painting Jesus Christ throws in its faint suggestion of the peaks.[1]

2. The hills were associated with the greatest events in the history of Israel. The Old Testament is the record of the soul, and it is written against a background of the hills. It is true that it does not open in the mountains. It opens in the luxuriance of a garden. Its opening scene is an idyllic picture in the bosom of an earthly paradise. But when man has fallen, and sounded the great deeps, and begun to cry for the God whom he has lost, then are we driven from the garden scenery and brought amid the grandeur of the hills. It is on Ararat that the ark rests, when the judgment of the waters has been stayed. It is to a mountain-top that Abraham is summoned to make his sacrifice of Isaac. And not on the plain where the Israelites are camped, but amid the cloudy splendour of Mount Sinai, does God reveal Himself, and give His law, and enter into covenant with man. Do we wonder that the exiled Psalmist said, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains"? They were dyed deep for him with sacred memory, and rich with the precious heritage of years. Nor was it merely a heritage of home; it was a heritage of God and of the soul. Among the hills Israel had learned everything that made her mighty as a spiritual power.

[1] G. H. Morrison, *The Return of the Angels*, 100.

¶ From Venice, Ruskin travelled by Milan and Turin to Susa, and over the Pass of Mont Cenis. Among the mountains he recovered at once health and spirits. His first morning among the hills after the long months in Italy, he accounted a turning-point in his life:

"I woke from a sound tired sleep in a little one-windowed room at Lans-le-bourg, at six of the summer morning, June 2nd, 1841; the red aiguilles on the north relieved against pure blue—the great pyramid of snow down the valley in one sheet of eastern light. I dressed in three minutes, ran down the village street, across the stream, and climbed the grassy slope on the south side of the valley, up to the first pines. I had found my life again;—all the best of it. What good of religion, love, admiration or hope, had ever been taught me, or felt by my best nature, rekindled at once; and my line of work, both by my own will and the aid granted to it by fate in the future, determined for me. I went down thankfully to my father and mother, and told them I was sure I should get well."

Ruskin might have said very literally with the Psalmist: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, whence cometh my help."[1]

¶ Nature has many aspects, and God is behind them all; but the mass and grandeur, the vast solitudes and deep recesses in the heart of the hills, are, in a peculiar sense, the inner shrine where He waits for those who come, worn and confused, from the noise and strife of the world. Here the sounds of man's struggle are lost in His peace; here the fever of desire and the agitation of emotion are calmed in His silence. The great hills, purple with heather or green with moss, rise peak beyond peak in sublime procession; the mountain streams run dark and cool through dim and hidden channels, singing that song without words which is sweet with all purity and fresh with the cleanness of the untrodden heights. Through the narrow passes one walks with a silent joy, born of a renewed sense of relationship with the sublime order of the world, and of a fresh communion with the Spirit of which all visible things are the symbol and garment. This is perhaps the greatest service which the hills of God render to him who seeks them with an open mind and heart. Their grandeur silently dispels one's scepticism in the possible greatness of man's life. In a world where such heights rise in lonely majesty, the soul, to which they speak with voices so manifold and so eloquent, feels anew the divinity which shapes its destiny, and gains a fresh faith in the things that are unseen and eternal.[2]

[1] E. T. Cook, *The Life of Ruskin*, i. 120.

[2] H. W. Mabie, *The Life of the Spirit*, 81.

3. The hills evermore summon us to look up. The influence of the world begets a downward look, a sort of set of the eyes and heart downwards. We are in the world; in a thousand subtle ways we are kin with the world. We are subject to its influences, caught by its wind of excitement, absorbed by its pressing claims, and then we may easily be of the world as well as in it. But everything the world presents to us is below us, beneath us, and it so keeps us looking down that at last the habit of down-looking grows upon us. The world offers the attraction of its riches, but money is all below us, and we must look down upon it. The world fascinates us with its learning and its science, but books and experiments are all below us, we must look down upon them. The world bids the siren pleasure float on golden wing before us, winning us to her pursuit; but she ever flies low, and we must look down upon her. Even the better things that the world may give us, the things of family life and love, are still all below us; we look down even on the children about our feet.

¶ I have read of a woman who worked hard with her pen, and at last found her eyes troubling her. The oculist whom she consulted told her that her eyes needed rest and change. From the windows of her home there was a grand view of some distant hills, and the doctor told her, when her eyes were tired with work, to look out of the window and gaze on the distant hills. It is good for us all to look out of the window sometimes. If we are always looking at the rooms where we live, the shop where we trade, the farm or the counting-house, we begin to think there is nothing else. Our little bit of ground is all this world and the next; we never see anything beyond our own handiwork, we are blind to all else, like the horse in the coal-mine.[1]

¶ Sailors tell us that at sea, when the fog is so dense that they cannot see far ahead, they climb the rigging; and, seated there upon the yard-arm, they may see the heavens bathed in sunshine and the blue sky above the billows of mist that lie below.

God hath His uplands, bleak and bare,
Where He doth bid us rest awhile—
Crags where we breathe the purer air,
Lone peaks that catch the day's first smile.

[1] H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Day by Day Duty*, 27.

Lift me, O Lord, above the level plain,
Beyond the cities where life throbs and thrills,
And in the cool airs let my spirit gain
The stable strength and courage of Thy hills.

They are Thy secret dwelling places, Lord.
Like Thy majestic prophets, old and hoar,
They stand assembled in divine accord,
Thy sign of stablished power for evermore.

Lead me yet farther, Lord, to peaks more clear,
Until the clouds like shining meadows lie,
Where through the deeps of silence I may hear
The thunder of Thy legions marching by.

## II.

### The Cry of Helplessness.

**"From whence shall my help come?"**

1. The exile in Babylon had a dreary desert, peopled by wild tribes hostile to him, stretching between his present home and that home where he desired to be; and it would be difficult for him to get away from the dominion that held him captive, unless by consent of the power of whom he was the vassal. So the more the thought of the mountains of Israel drew the Psalmist, the more there came into his mind the thought, How am I to be made able to reach that blessed soil? And surely, if we saw, with anything like a worthy apprehension and vision, the greatness of the blessedness that lies yonder for Christian souls, we should feel far more deeply than we do the impossibility, as far as we are concerned, of our ever reaching it. The sense of our own weakness and the consciousness of the perils upon the path ought ever to be present with us all.

¶ Man knows that he is low, that he needs to be lifted up, that he cannot lift himself—he can but lift up his eyes. He knows that his lowness is not lowly, but degraded and proud. By his natural birth he has come into low places, and in himself he has forsaken the heights. What he is by nature he has confirmed by choice, and allowed the conditions of his natural birth to form his character and determine his life. He has inverted

the true order of his parts and powers, degraded his nobler faculties, and raised to a bad eminence his lower passions and propensities.[1]

2. All the delights of Babylon could not satisfy the exile's longing. He was perfectly comfortable in Babylon. There was abundance of everything that he wanted for his life. The Jews there were materially quite as well off as, and many of them a great deal better off than, ever they had been in their narrow little strip of mountain land, shut in between the desert and the sea. But for all that, fat, wealthy Babylon was not Palestine. So amid the luxuriant vegetation, the wealth of water and the fertile plains, the Psalmist longed for the mountains, though the mountains are often bare of green things. It was that longing that led to his looking to the hills. Do we know anything of that longing which makes us "that are in this tabernacle to groan, being burdened"? Unless our Christianity throws us out of harmony and contentment with the present, it is worth very little. And unless we know something of that immortal longing to be nearer to God, and fuller of Christ, and emancipated from sense and from the burdens and trivialities of life, we have yet to learn what the meaning of walking "not after the flesh but after the Spirit" really is.

¶ Writing from Aberdeen to Lady Boyd, Samuel Rutherford says: "I have not now, of a long time, found such high springtides as formerly. The sea is out, and I cannot buy a wind and cause it to flow again; only I wait on the shore till the Lord sends a full sea. . . . But even to dream of Him is sweet." And then just over the leaf, to Marion McNaught: "I am well: honour to God. . . . He hath broken in upon a poor prisoner's soul like the swelling of Jordan. I am bank and brim full: a great high springtide of the consolations of Christ hath overwhelmed me." But sweet as it is to read his rapturous expressions when the tide is full, I feel it far more helpful to hear how he still looks and waits for the return of the tide when the tide is low, and when the shore is full, as all left shores are apt to be, of weeds and mire, and all corrupt and unclean things. Rutherford is never more helpful to his correspondents than when they consult him about their ebb tides, and find that he himself either has been, or still is, in the same experience.[2]

[1] W. Pulsford. [2] A. Whyte, *Samuel Rutherford and Some of his Correspondents.*

3. Even the hills could not send help. Verse 2 declares that, although the hills stand for earth's best defence, the singer's hope is in the Creator, not in things created, in Him who set fast the mountains, and is higher than they as heavens are higher than earth. The insufficiency of the hills is again implied in the two striking pictures of the third and fourth verses. Smooth rock or sliding sand, loose rubble or slippery turf, landslide beneath or avalanche from above, may betray the climber to injury or destruction. But Jehovah delivers His people from falling, and establishes their goings. Again, the recumbent hills lie ever wrapt in proverbial and unbroken sleep. They heed not, they hear not, and they suffer the night to change the cliff from a defence to a danger, and the slumbering slopes sound no alarm as the enemy scales them under cover of the night. But God is ever wakeful for His own—and darkness and the light are both alike to Him. The contrast is continued in verse 5. The hills are passive, God is active; He guards, He is fortress, garrison, and patrol. The strongest hill-forts must be well defended, or Petra will fall to Rome, the Heights of Abraham to Wolfe, Hannibal will pass the Alps, and Xerxes outflank Leonidas by Thermopylæ. The soldier must guard the hill that guards him, but God guards all.

¶ We must avoid the mistakes frequently made by poets who have sought to personify nature and find in it a response to the varying moods of human life, and by theologians who have found in it an analogy of the ways of God. Nature is not like God. Her laws disclose no moral standards. When these are introduced she appears full not only of contradictions but of cruelties, and the God whose character we could induce from a consideration of the laws of nature would be as immoral as the pagan divinities. We need something nearer, more human and considerate, a God who can understand and suffer and love. Indeed we are so far from the poets who seek in nature an echo of their own inner life as to feel that it is in offering us an escape from ourselves that nature is most helpful to man. There she lies inscrutable, placid, expansive; now wrapped in mists and clouds, now sun-smitten or attacked by the furious onset of the thunderstorm. The craving for sympathy from her is morbid; we must find health in her unresponsiveness, her *healing want of sympathy* with morbid souls.[1]

[1] J. Kelman, *Ephemera Eternitatis*, 224.

¶ Tennyson's outlook on the universe could not ignore the dark and dismaying facts of existence, and his faith, which rose above the shriek of Nature, was not based upon arguments derived from any survey of external, physical Nature. When he confined his outlook to this, he could see power and mechanism, but he could not from these derive faith. His vision must go beyond the mere physical universe; he must see life and see it whole; he must include that which is highest in Nature, even man, and only then could he find the resting-place of faith. He thus summed up the matter once when we had been walking up and down the "Ball-room" at Farringford: "It is hard," he said, "it is hard to believe in God; but it is harder not to believe. I believe in God, not from what I see in Nature, but from what I find in man." I took him to mean that the witness of Nature was only complete when it included all that was in Nature, and that the effort to draw conclusions from Nature when man, the highest-known factor in Nature, was excluded, could only lead to mistake. I do not think he meant, however, that external Nature gave no hints of a superintending wisdom or even love, for his own writings show, I think, that such hints had been whispered to him by flower and star; I think he meant that faith did not find her platform finally secure beneath her feet till she had taken count of man. The response to all that is highest in Nature is found in the heart of man, and man cannot deny this highest, because it is latent in himself already. But I must continue Tennyson's own words: "It is hard to believe in God, but it is harder not to believe in Him. I don't believe in His goodness from what I see in Nature. In Nature I see the mechanician; I believe in His goodness from what I find in my own breast."[1]

## III.

### The Faith of a True Israelite.

**"My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth."**

Here is the mark rather of a Babylonian than of a home-abiding Jew. This way of describing God—"which made heaven and earth"—is not usual by any means in the Psalms or elsewhere in the Scriptures. It occurs three times in these Pilgrim Songs, and only once in all the Psalms besides, and that Psalm (the 115th) seems to have been written after the Captivity. This

[1] Bishop Boyd Carpenter, in *Tennyson and His Friends*, 303.

large thought of God did not come naturally to the mind of an Israelite. The *truth* indeed he did accept. It was an item of his creed that the Lord of his worship did make heaven and earth, all visible and invisible things: but it was not his spontaneous thought about God. "Thou that walkest in the camp of *Israel*." "Thou that sittest *between the cherubims*, shine forth." There was the localizing of God in the heart of a Jew: one holy place for the tabernacles of the Most High. "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever." The King, yes the King of all the earth, but especially *our God*. But the exiled Jew has the one advantage at least, that he escaped this narrowness of thought. The Jew born in Babylon (and almost all of those who returned from the Captivity were born in Babylon; the ancient men who had seen the first Temple, and wept because of the poverty of the second Temple, were very few indeed)—the Jew born in Babylon could hardly fail to take broad views of life. There was a tendency in all surrounding things to uncramp the thoughts. He lived in the midst of vastness. The mighty town itself more than fifty miles in circuit; the palace of the kings within it more than twice as large as the whole city of Jerusalem: and then those boundless plains spread forth under the great heavens, and losing themselves on all sides in the distant horizon—they that lived in the midst of these scenes took an impress from them. The sign of it appears in these children of the Captivity, whose eyes were lifted towards the hills of the sacred land, and who, looking forth over the months of its weariness and hazards, asked, one on behalf of all, "From whence cometh my help?" and answered, one on behalf of all, "My help cometh from the Lord." Not the God of Jacob or of Israel, or of Him that sitteth between the cherubims; the teaching of Babylon has erased those barriers and exalted God above the universe. "My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth."

1. Help from God is sure to come when our spirits hold fellowship with Him. To do this often, and on occasion to linger long, cannot but have a great influence on our spirit. We become

more and more of a heavenly mind, and look to heaven as our own place and as the goal of all our hopes. We live here with a view to our life there. We choose our intimates from those who shall still be our fellows there. We seek such gains as we can lay up there against the time of our coming. We disengage ourselves from all that we shall have to leave, and we refuse to make a home where our spirit never can feel at home. We keep ourselves free to arise at any moment and, by help from beyond the hills, to pass beyond, and not return.

¶ Did you ever read that fascinating chapter in Washington Irving's Life of Columbus where he describes the bursting of the New World upon the little crew which set out with Columbus on that memorable voyage? It is one of the most thrilling and most pathetic bits of recorded history. Columbus from a boy had dreamt of this discovery. Kings, statesmen, and philosophers had all been against him. But on he fought undaunted; and at last the reward was here.

> Chances have laws as fixed as planets have,
> And disappointment's dry and bitter root,
> Envy's harsh berries, and the choking pool
> Of the world's scorn, are the right mother-milk
> To the tough hearts that pioneer their kind,
> And break a pathway to those unknown realms
> That in the earth's broad shadow lie enthralled;
> Endurance is the crowning quality,
> And patience all the passion of great hearts;
> One faith against a whole earth's unbelief,
> One soul against the flesh of all mankind.[1]

2. When God sends help, the spirit finds rests. He who penned this psalm, being a slave and a foreigner, had much to bear and to fear, and he lived under constant strain. For him, moreover, there was no break in the routine, and only a faint hope of one day being set free to find his way home. His spirit, however, was beyond the hand of the conqueror, and need suffer no exile. It was lord of itself, and could choose its own place and take rest at due times. It had wings swifter than the dove's, and could fly beyond the hills and alight within the hush of the Holy Shrine. There, with all about him so different from the accustomed scene, he found a peace such as common words

[1] D. W. Whincup, *The Training of Life*, 39.

could not express. To tell it, he had to sing it, and in this world of unquiet hearts his song has been so prized that now no other is more widely known.

One and all, we are bent on winning this same rest of spirit. All our quest is, indeed, but this one endeavour. We strive after success, or pleasure, or influence; but, behind it all, there is our inborn longing for the one true home and the one true life. Such rest can come to us—sinners, and exiles because of our sin—only as we look, with this man, beyond the hills to the blood-besprinkled Mercy Seat. There, where we see the Divine pardon, we see a Help that is alert by day and night, and that is active against all that would do us ill.

¶ The Archduke Palatine died in 1847, a humble and believing penitent at the foot of the Cross. He had for many years been a regular reader of the Bible, but it was only when the shadows of the coming darkness gathered round him that full spiritual light arose in his soul. Several months before his death he was seized with a violent illness, which threatened to carry him off. From this he partially recovered. A cloud passed over him for a time, but it was dissolved, and he became unusually cheerful. He acknowledged afterwards that in the days of gloom he had been reviewing his past life, and had everywhere discovered sin, and that now he put his whole trust in the merits and righteousness of Christ. Soon afterwards his last illness began. A few hours before his death his wife said to him, "As you are now so soon to stand before the judgment-seat of God, I wish to hear from you for the last time what is the ground on which you rest your hope." His immediate reply was, "The blood of Christ alone," with a strong emphasis on the *alone*.[1]

3. The help of the Lord means moral health and vigour. To this poet, life in Babylon was a ceaseless jeopardy of spirit. As he passed from day to day he seemed to himself as one hastening on foot across the desert. The sun blazed on him from a cloudless sky, and spears of fire struck into his heart and drank his strength. When the longed-for night came, the moon brought a dew that chilled him to the marrow, while she sought to pierce eye and brain with her arrows of steel. Nevertheless he journeyed unfainting and unfevered! One, unseen, walked at his right hand to do what his right hand, with all its strength and skill, could

[1] G. Carlyle, *A Memoir of Adolph Saphir*, 44.

not accomplish. Not in vain had he made frequent flight of spirit beyond the hills, and kept alive his fellowship with the Lord of Zion. What though he could not stay day and night in the sanctuary? He who made it safe would come forth with him and be ever by him. The earthly figure was not fit to picture all the fact. The heavenly Guard, as Spirit Infinite, is in the threatened spirit. He fills and clears and lifts the life, so that the evil influences have no effect for evil. The godly man can live in Babylon, and be as safe from sin as if he were in Jerusalem, a priest at the altar and never outside the sacred walls.

¶ When Dr. Wilberforce was enthroned as Bishop of Chichester, his first sermon in his new Cathedral had as its text the opening verse of his favourite Psalm—the 121st. The sermon concluded with these words: "If I inquire from those who have preceded me the secret of their power, as, called unto their rest, they now throng up the steeps of light, each, with faithful finger, points to the motto of his life, 'I will lift up mine eyes to the hills, whence cometh my help.' To the hills where the first faint rays of the coming dawn are seen; where echoes haunt and linger, caught from higher heights beyond, where air is pure and free and strong; to the hills lifted above the swamps and the miasma, above the low-lying lands of doubt and uncertainty, above the babble and the questioning, above 'the world's loud stunning tide,' up where they rear themselves towards the gathering of the solemn stars, where the night winds whisper, and the beat of angel wings is heard, where man can commune with his God, whence cometh help. To the hills, where the showers gather big with blessing, and fall drop by drop till the rills begin to sparkle and leap, and the tiny rivulets are swelling into the broadening river, refreshing hamlet and homestead, falling down into the plain and cleansing every city, sweeping onward with its gathering burden to the mighty sea, the broad fertilizing stream of the life of the Church of God."[1]

When sick of life and all the world—
How sick of all desire but Thee!—
I lift mine eyes up to the hills,
  Eyes of my heart that see,
I see beyond all death and ills
Refreshing green for heart and eyes,
The golden streets and gateways pearled,
  The trees of Paradise.[2]

[1] J. B. Atlay, *Bishop Ernest Wilberforce*, 226. [2] Christina G. Rossetti.

# Guardianship in Daily Life.

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## Guardianship in Daily Life.

**The Lord shall keep thy going out and thy coming in,**
**From this time forth and for evermore.—Ps. cxxi. 8.**

1. We often make a mistake in endeavouring to associate these Old Testament hymns with *great* occasions in the history of God's chosen race, with the important events and crises through which they were called to pass, forgetting, as we do, that Israel, and God's servants of every age and place, need Him most of all, and need the uplift of every possible grace most of all, in the continuous processes of life's development and the humdrum experiences of an everyday world. It needs no great stretch of the imagination to believe that some Robert Burns of his generation wrote down these lines as the expression of his simple belief in the all-providing care of Jehovah and His sleepless watchfulness.

2. The very essence of the psalm is simplicity; here you find no high flights of poetic imagination, no startling metaphors or fresh truth. And yet there is a warm glow in its message, and there is a fragrance in its simple trust, which have made it one of the best loved of all the psalms, to both Jews and Christians throughout the world. It is the song of a man who found life transfigured by a thought, a thought born out of his own experience—that the God of the everlasting hills was no mere spectator of human struggles, no indolent Deity calming himself to sleep amid the perturbations of a universe and the unheeded cries of his creatures. It is the song of a man who had seen God's rainbow on the dark background of the day's routine, and was assured that all is well. It is the song of a man whose ambitions were of a lowly character, and who was content to go out and in, to meet life's appointments, if so be that the Lord Himself would be his keeper. And what a power lies secreted in the heart of a song when a man can sing it with the emphasis of experience!

## I.

### Going Out and Coming In.

1. These words practically mean the activities, the intercourse, the incidents of life. Again and again we meet with this phrase in the Old Testament Scriptures. Take for instance 2 Sam. iii. 25 There Joab warns David that Abner has come with the pretence of friendship, but really to take note of his circumstances and the weak points at which to attack his throne. "He came," said Joab, "to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest." Again, see Isaiah xxxvii. 28; there the Lord through His prophet is speaking of the terrible Sennacherib, the assailant of Jerusalem. "I know thy abode," so run the words, "and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me." Here in both passages, the meaning clearly is the whole course and conduct of life, all its active incidents, all things in which man goes out amongst others and comes home to himself again, alternating company and privacy, engaging in the varied undertakings of an active existence. It is in fact life, not spent in the monotony of a cloister, or of a wilderness, but thronging with the realities of the common day and hour.

2. Home is the centre of the picture; the day begins and ends here. Its journey does not take its bearings from the points of the compass. It is not eastward or westward, but homeward or away from home. So simple are the directions of the daily pilgrimage, going out and coming in, that some of us perhaps hardly value the fair promise that God shall protect them both. We, whose lives move through a limited field, easily form the habit of prosaic outlooks, regarding our existence as a commonplace and dull matter. We go out without wonder, and return without surprise. We lose that fine fancy of childhood which made a walk into the next street an expedition and brought us back from the woodlands as travellers from a far country. That we can now step from the door with no thrill in the morning, and that our hearts do not throb as our hands feel for the latch at eventide, speaks an imagination of crippled power.

¶ One of the great dividing-lines in human life is the threshold-line. On one side of this line a man has his "world within the world," the sanctuary of life, the sheltered place of peace, the scene of life's most personal, sacred, and exclusive obligations. And on the other side lies the larger life of mankind, wherein also a man must take his place and do his work. Life is spent in crossing this threshold-line, going out to the many and coming in to the few, going out to answer the call of labour and coming in to take the right to rest. And over us all every hour there watches the Almighty Love. The division-lines in the life of man have nothing that corresponds to them in the love of God. We may be here or there, but He is everywhere.[1]

3. The threshold of the home does not draw the truest division-line in life between the outward and the inward. Life is made up of thought and action, of the manifest things and the hidden things. "Thy going out." That is our life as it is manifest to others, as it has points of contact with the world about us. We must go out. We must take up some attitude towards all other life. We must add our word to the long human story and our touch to the fashioning of the world. We need the pledge of Divine help in that life of ours in which, for their good or ill, others must have a place and a part. "And thy coming in"—into that uninvaded sanctum of thought. Did we say uninvaded? Not so. In that inner room of life there sits Regret with her pale face, and Shame with dust on her forehead, and Memory with tears in her eyes. Our coming in is a pitiable thing at times. More than one man has consumed his life in a flame of activity because he could not abide the coming in. "The Lord shall keep . . . thy coming in." That means help for every lonely, impotent, inward hour of life.

¶ It is as we convince and persuade ourselves that God is our Keeper who is also the Maker of heaven and earth, that we are delivered from our bondage to care and fear. We could do no wiselier, then, if we are still seeking the rest of faith, than to translate the phrases of this ancient Psalm into the terms of our modern experience, and to adopt them as a meditation and a prayer:—

"I am beset with cares, night and day—cares for myself and cares for my friends, cares for health physical and mental, cares

[1] P. C. Ainsworth, *The Threshold Grace*, 11.

of business and cares of home, cares about life and cares about death, cares for both body and soul. Where shall I look for help? None can really help me but God. He *will* help me. And He is the Maker of all things. What can I want, then, that He cannot give? What need I fear when He is my Shield? He is not a man, as I am, soon fatigued, soon exhausted. He has worked hitherto, and will work. The whole course of the human story has been ordained and conducted by Him; and, in every age and every nation, those who have sincerely trusted in Him have been content and at peace. Why should I distrust Him, then? I will *not* distrust Him. He will keep me in the perils of the day, and in the perils of the night. No form of evil can evade His eye or resist His will. Why should He not keep me from *all* evil, if He cares for me, as He does, and for all men? When I go down to business He will keep me. He will watch over, not my body alone, or my health, or my life: He will also keep my soul, strengthening it by adversity and by the changes of time. No change, no lapse of time, neither death, nor even life, can separate me from Him, my chief Good, and the Source of all other good. I will trust in Him. I will rest in Him. I have done with care, and fear, and the frets of life, and the dread of death; for I have taken sanctuary in Him, who will be the health of my soul from this time forth and for evermore."

If we were thus to dwell and linger on the thought of God and His care for us, to insist on it to ourselves, to repeat and vary our expression of it, to hark back to it again and again; if we could but rise and settle into the conviction of a tender fatherly Providence that covers our whole life, and extends through all time; we too might feel the swell and sacred glow of the Hebrew pilgrims who sang the praise of Jehovah, their Keeper and ours.[1]

## II.

### The Peril of the Common Round.

It was much for the folk of an early time to say that as they went forth the Lord went with them, but it is more for men to say and know that same thing to-day. The "going out" has come to mean more age after age, generation after generation. It was a simpler thing once than it is now. "Thy going out"—the shepherd to his flocks, the farmer to his field, the merchant to

[1] S. Cox, *The Pilgrim Psalms*, 44.

his merchandise. There are still flocks and fields and markets, but where are the leisure, the grace, and the simplicity of life for him who has any share in the world's work? Men go out to-day to face a life shadowed by vast industrial, commercial, and social problems. Life has grown complicated, involved, hard to understand, difficult to deal with. Tension, conflict, subtlety, surprise, and amid it all, or over it all, a vast brooding weariness that ever and again turns the heart sick.

1. *There is peril in going out.*—What does this going out involve? Surely it means a great exchange—an exchange of peace for warfare, passing from privacy into publicity, leaving those who know us so intimately and love us so well, and going amongst the many, perhaps unknowing and unloving. On the one side of the line we share with others, on the other side we are claiming for ourselves. Here we find our greatest joy in giving; there, usually, our greatest joy is in getting. Here we love and work for one another; there the common aim is to work for ourselves. Within the doorway, on this side of the threshold, life is common, but there, outside, it is individualistic to a degree. Competition rages, fierce and unabating, every day changing its detail, its methods, and its scope. There are slow, grinding changes in the common life which crush the sluggard to the wall, and there are quick sudden surprises which overwhelm even the wary.

There are elements of danger in modern life that threaten all the world's toilers, whatever their work may be and wherever they may have to do it. There is the danger that always lurks in *things*—a warped judgment, a confused reckoning, a narrowed outlook. It is so easily possible for a man to be at close grips with the world, and yet to be ever more and more out of touch with its realities. The danger in the places where men toil is not that God is denied with a vociferous atheism; it is that He is ignored by an unvoiced indifference. It is not the babel of the market-place that men need to fear; it is its silence. If we say that we live only as we love, that we are strong only as we are pure, that we are successful only as we become just and good, the world into which we go forth does not deny these things, but it ignores them. And thus the real battle of life is not the toil for bread. It is fought by all who would keep alive and fresh in their

hearts the truth that man doth not live by bread alone. For no man is this going out easy; for some it is at times terrible, for all it means a need that only this promise avails to meet—"The Lord shall keep thy going out." He shall fence thee about with the ministry of His Spirit, and give thee grace to know, everywhere and always, that thou art in this world to live for His kingdom of love and truth and to grow a soul.

¶ Put before your mind a man who is fully exposed to real life; imagine him with all the complications of his character: his defects of will, his disadvantage of temperament, his imperfect balance of thought and feeling. What is to happen to him in his going out and coming in? Look at him going out from church for instance. Even on the Sunday night he cannot leave these doors but more or less he finds himself in miscellaneous circumstances at once. And he will soon be waking up to Monday morning, and all the calls and all the undertakings of the week. He will not spend the week—we shall not spend it—under a sanctuary roof; he will have to engage in the business of the hour, to attend, like most of us, to things which in themselves are of the earth, earthy. He will have to do, as we shall, possibly in close personal intercourse, time after time, with those who know not our hope and love not our Lord, and are thinking of anything in the world but of helping us on for heaven. Look at this man in his "going out"—out to all the countless circumstances that make up life for him; and he cannot keep himself! Look at him in his "coming in." He comes into the home circle; and home is too often the place where man is most off his guard. Or perhaps he is away from home life, living by himself; he comes into the privacy of his study, to his college rooms, to his lodgings in the town. However, he "comes in"; and the enemy will be waiting for that man; some snare, be sure, will be set for his feet, within or without, in the regions of thought, of imagination, of habit, all alone. Ah, what shall he do? How shall he face the perpetual effort, to watch always, to meet and to conquer everything in the going out and the coming in?[1]

2. *There is peril in coming in.*—It might seem to some that once a man was safely across the threshold of his home he might stand in less need of this promise of help. But experience says otherwise. The world has little respect for any man's threshold. It is capable of many a bold and shameless intrusion. The things

[1] H. C. G. Moule, *Thy Keeper*, 73.

that harass a man as he earns his bread sometimes haunt him as he eats it. No home is safe unless faith be the doorkeeper. "In peace will I both lay me down and sleep: for thou, Lord, alone makest me dwell in safety." The singer of that song knew that, as in the moil of the world, so also in the shelter of the place he named his dwelling-place, peace and safety were not of his making, but of God's giving.

The returns of life are hardly less adventurous and fraught with surprise than its outgoings. There are apprehensions that wake as we move into the areas of our familiar places again. What may have chanced in the hours of absence? What shock of joy or sorrow may have broken on the home? To what revelation for which our hearts are unprepared are we drawing near? There are moods in which the least sensitive of us has known these questionings. When sickness or anxiety is in the house, our feelings are intensified to a pitch at which we scarcely know whether to hasten or to linger. Or, when our nerves have been strained and jangled in the business hours, they may be quickened to an ominous foreboding.

And, indeed, it is always true that as changes have been worked for us who have been out in the busy world, so for those we left at home there have been also sequences of change. As we do not return the same men we went out in the morning, we do not find quite the same presences awaiting us. The home has had its own temptations and battle-grounds as well as the shop; the wife and children have passed through their spiritual disciplines as well as ourselves. For some hours we have been out of contact; our developments may have been different. The ways along which we have journeyed may not have been the same, not even parallel, nor in the same direction. Our lessons may not have been similar, and our moods and thoughts may have moved on divergent planes.

We may be coming with buoyant steps from a day's work, where all has gone fairly and smoothly, to a house where numberless small irritations have ruffled the temper and played upon the heart. Or we may return weary and disheartened to a hearth where the day has passed in peaceful routine. We are in a sense strangers to one another. We have to adjust ourselves and to seek a new point of contact, and it may be very easily missed.

We may strike in sudden discord upon one another, our unattuned moods may jar and clash. A husband's buoyancy may enter unsympathetically upon a mood of his wife who is worried and overstrained, or the man's ruffled temper may turn the placid welcome of the woman to bitterness, and so the peace that ought ever to be found on the threshold of home is not found there.

¶ A Christian woman in a burst of querulous questioning said, "Ah, if these good men had like me the charge of six little children, and only a careless girl to help them, they would know better whether it is possible to be *always* at peace." Yes! "The Lord shall keep *thy coming in.*" Home—nursery—kitchen, are His as much as the closet. His keeping is *needed* in them all, and is equally possible there.[1]

## III.

### The Keeper of Our Way.

1. The recurring and characteristic word of the psalm is "keep"; it is repeated no fewer than six times in the last six verses. The Creator of the universe is the Keeper of Israel. The Keeper of the whole nation is the Keeper of the individual man. The Keeper of the man and the nation does not fall into slumber from weariness; nor is his life, through mortal weakness, an alternate waking and sleeping; He guards them from the perils of the night as well as from the perils of the day. He keeps those who trust in Him from evil of every form. He keeps their very soul, their most inward and secret life. He keeps them in all the changes and intercourses of their outward life, their goings out and their comings in. He keeps them through all lapse of time, now and for evermore.

We need more than ever to convince our own hearts and to lay emphasis upon the truth of the constant supervision of our Father in Heaven over the minutest details of our lives, for, as Carlyle put it, "The Almighty God is not like a clockmaker that once in old, immeasurable ages, having made his horologe of a universe, sits ever since and sees it go." Such a travesty of Providence leads to a gloomy fatalism, a fatalism that robs the heart of joy and of the safe-guarding realization of God's near and

[1] J. E. Cumming, *The Blessed Life*, 100.

ever-defending Presence. And there is nothing that can counteract this movement towards spiritual pessimism, but "practising the presence of God."

In the little introductory poem to the *Autobiography of Mark Rutherford*, there is a line that expresses the feelings of a multitude of men and women: "I was ever commonplace." That was certainly never true of Rutherford, and it is never true of any man. And that feeling robs life of all its beauty and its strength. If we believe that we are commonplace, our work commonplace, and our destiny commonplace, then we will do our best not to belie our character. Therefore, our hopes are blasted, and our work becomes in very deed a cruel drudgery. Could we but convince ourselves that the Lord Himself is our Keeper; could we but assure ourselves that we are linked to the eternal purpose of the Almighty, that nothing is commonplace in the outgoings and the incomings of our lives, then we should dream dreams and see visions. We should stand on our feet as the sons of God. We should be filled with the glowing hope of a new enthusiasm. Every duty would be an anvil on which we would forge another link for the chain of character, and every temptation another opportunity of adding something to our credit and the honour of our Lord. Even the very darkness of sorrow and pain would but bring out the stars of God's mercies.

¶ You have heard of the man who, when he was dying, asked that they should inscribe upon his tombstone just one word, and that one word was not his name, his good deeds, or anything about him; but over the anonymous corpse that lay beneath was to be the word "Kept." It was a stroke of genius. "Kept." That will do. If I live until I am ninety, and do well all that time, when I come to die, put me down in my grave, and only put that over the top of me, and I will be full content—"Kept."[1]

2. God stands at the door morning and evening, like a sentinel, to keep us under friendly observation. The Hebrews attached a good deal of religious significance to the doorway. Even now the pious Jew hangs on his doorpost the *mezuzah*, a small metal cylinder, which contains a piece of parchment on which is inscribed the famous command in Deuteronomy: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God

[1] J. McNeill, *Regent Square Pulpit*, iii. 249.

with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children . . . and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." That command is still fulfilled. The Jew fixes the little case, with the parchment inside, on the upper part of the right-hand post of his door, and every time he goes in or comes out he touches it and he recites the words of this text.

¶ It is said that the great conqueror, Alexander, was able, like Napoleon, to sleep amid the noise and tumult of battle. On a friend expressing surprise at the achievement, he replied, Parmenio watches! But the Maker of Parmenio, the faithful sentinel, is our keeper! How safe we are when we lie in the Bosom of God! How safe when we walk with our hand in God's! Walking or resting, waking or sleeping, we are safe, if the Lord is our Shepherd.[1]

3. The true Guardian is also the Good Shepherd. There are few of the psalms which the early Christians referred more frequently to Christ. On the lintel of an ancient house in the Hauran may be read the inscription: "O Jesus Christ, be the shelter and defence of the home and of the whole family, and bless their incoming and outgoing." How may we also sing this psalm of Christ? By remembering the new pledges He has given us that God's thoughts and God's heart are with us. By remembering the infinite degree which the cross has revealed, not only of the interest God takes in our life, but of the responsibility He Himself assumes for its eternal issues. The cross was no new thing. The cross was the putting of the love of God, of the blood of Christ, into the old fundamental pieties of the human heart, the realizing by Jesus in Himself of the dearest truths about God. Look up, then, and sing this psalm of Him. Can we lift our eyes to any of the hills without seeing His figure upon them? Is there a human ideal, duty or hope with which Jesus is not inseparably and for ever identified? Is there a human experience—the struggle of the individual heart in temptation, the pity of the multitude, the warfare against the strongholds of wickedness—from which we can imagine Him absent? No; it is impossible for any high outline of morality or religion to break

[1] J. M. Scott, *Some Favourite Psalms*, 124.

upon the eyes of our race; it is impossible for any field of righteous battle, any flood of suffering to unroll, without the vision of Christ upon it. He dominates our highest aspirations, and is felt by our side in our deepest sorrows. There is no loneliness, whether of height or of depth, which He does not enter by the side of His own.

Who has assumed responsibility for our life as Christ has? Who has taken upon himself the safety and the honour, not of the little tribe for whom this psalm was first sung, but of the whole of the children of men? He took upon Himself our weariness, He lifted our sorrow, He disposed of our sin—as only God can call or lift or dispose. Nothing exhausted His pity, or His confidence to deal with us; nothing ever betrayed a fault in His character, or belied the trust His people put in Him. He suffers not thy foot to be moved; He neither slumbers nor sleeps.

¶ Christ will keep us as a shepherd doth his flock. What a possession those of us have who can say, "The Lord is my shepherd," not "the" or "our," but "my" own, even should there be thousands of other sheep besides. Why is He called "the great Shepherd of the sheep"? Because surely He is Intercessor, High Priest, Mediator, Surety, Captain of Salvation, Author and Finisher of Faith, Forerunner, King of Righteousness, King of Peace: He is all these, and all else His sheep need; for see our provision, "I shall not want." I should think not; with such a Shepherd, how can we? Our position, "He maketh me to lie down." No sheep lies down until it is satisfied—so our position as kept is just "to lie down," to rest on His bosom, secure in His care from all attacks from without or within. . . . Being kept by such a Shepherd, "surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life." The meaning of this is that in the East the head shepherd goes in front and two under-shepherds follow behind the sheep, to pick up any who become lame, or are prone to wander. Our Shepherd, who is to keep us, has commissioned Goodness and Mercy to thus follow us. We "shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck us out of his hand," and "we shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Having been kept all the way by His own power, for He will not give this work to another; we are so precious to Him that we are to be kept by the power that created heaven and earth. "Keep them in thine own name," He prays. The very name of the Lord is at stake.[1]

[1] G. Clarke, *The Keeper and the Kept*, 56.

4. The help and protection of the Lord accommodate themselves to all our individually varying states and circumstances. Help on our "right hand" is help for our whole sphere of life; help "by day and by night" is help under all changes; help which subdues the fierce power of the light and also protects from the evils which "walk in darkness" is help in all our conditions; "preservation for our soul" is help for our whole nature from its centre, help for body, soul, and spirit; help in our "going out and coming in" is help watchful and perpetual.

¶ I do not know how these words were interpreted when very literal meanings were attached to the parabolic words about the streets of gold and the endless song. But they present no difficulty to us. Indeed, they confirm that view of the future which is ever taking firmer hold of men's minds, and which is based on the growing sense of the continuity of life. To offer a man an eternity of music-laden rest is to offer him a poor thing. He would rather have his going out and his coming in. Yes, and he shall have them. All that is purest and best in them shall remain. Hereafter he shall still go out to find deeper joys of living and wider visions of life; still come in to greater and ever greater thoughts of God.[1]

¶ I know of a "going out" and a "coming in" when we shall specially need the preserving care of God; and to these, as to every other, may the promise be extended. There is a "going out" from this world; there is a "coming in" to the next world; the departure from the present scene of existence on the unknown futurity. But the Lord shall "preserve thy going out and thy coming in." Christ Jesus, according to His own declaration, has the keys of death and the invisible world; and therefore, it must be He who dismisses the spirit from the flesh, and opens to it the separate state.[2]

¶ The last day dawned, bringing a busy morning with correspondence and future plans. At a quarter to five letters and cheques were brought to him to sign, and he dictated two other letters. Soon after he fell asleep, and awoke at a quarter to six and partook of a light meal. During the progress of the meal he said to his wife, "My head is so heavy, let me rest it on your face." He appeared to have no pain but a slight choking sensation. Then he leaned back in his chair and passed away. He was not afraid of death. "I have looked," he had written not long previously in sympathizing with a dear friend on the loss of

[1] P. C. Ainsworth, *The Threshold Grace*, 17. [2] Henry Melvill.

her husband, "into the face of death. Three times has my life been given back to me after a dire struggle that nearly ended it all. But oh! I can tell you death is not so dark and drear as it is painted, even to the Christian. I felt as in the embrace of a friend."[1]

She sat within Life's Banquet Hall at noon,
When word was brought unto her secretly:
"The Master cometh onwards quickly; soon
Across the Threshold He will call for thee."
Then she rose up to meet Him at the Door,
But turning, courteous, made a farewell brief
To those that sat around. From Care and Grief
She parted first: . . .
Then turning unto twain
That stood together, tenderly and oft
She kissed them on their foreheads, whispering soft:
"Now must we part; yet leave me not before
Ye see me enter safe within the Door;
Kind bosom-comforters, that by my side
The darkest hour found ever closest bide,
A dark hour waits me, ere for evermore
Night with its heaviness be overpast;
Stay with me till I cross the Threshold o'er."
So Faith and Hope stayed by her till the last.

But giving both her hands
To one that stood the nearest: "Thou and I
May pass together; for the holy bands
God knits on earth are never loosed on high.
Long have I walked with thee; thy name arose
E'en in my sleep, and sweeter than the close
Of music was thy voice; for thou wert sent
To lead me homewards from my banishment
By devious ways, and never hath my heart
Swerved from thee, though our hands were wrung apart
By spirits sworn to sever us; above
Soon shall I look upon Thee as Thou art."
So she cross'd o'er with Love.[2]

[1] *Memoirs of the Late Dr. Barnardo*, 269.
[2] Dora Greenwell, *The Soul's Parting*.

# The House of the Lord.

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## The House of the Lord.

**I was glad when they said unto me,**
**Let us go unto the house of the Lord.—Ps. cxxii. 1.**

All who have made the Book of Psalms their study must have been struck with the deep and unaffected piety of the authors. The psalmists speak throughout the whole book of praising God, and praying to God as none could speak unless they were in earnest. There is a fervour in the language used by them which proves how surely their hearts were interested in what they uttered; which shows that religion was not to them a hollow form, something put on for policy or custom's sake, but a living, animating principle of conduct, the bread of their spiritual life, as necessary for their happiness as the food they ate was for their bodily existence.

¶ Instances of this heart-felt piety might be quoted from every portion of the Psalms. To take a few out of the many, we read in Psalm xxvi.: "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth. I will offer in thy dwelling an oblation with great gladness. I will sing and speak praise unto the Lord." And in Psalm xxvii.: "One thing have I desired of the Lord which I will require, even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit his temple." Again, at the opening of the famous Psalm lxxxiv. and all throughout it: "Oh! how amiable are thy dwellings, thou Lord of hosts! My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be always praising thee. . . . One day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness." And in Psalm cxvi., that which is so fittingly read at the churching of women, this is his language after he had experienced a great deliverance: "What reward shall I give unto the Lord, for all the benefits that he hath done

unto me? I will receive the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord in the sight of all his people; in the courts of the Lord's house, even in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem." And once more, in my text observe the psalmist's joy at the prospect of worshipping in the tabernacle: "I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord."[1]

## I.

### The Call to Worship.

**"They said unto me, Let us go."**

1. Worship is a necessity of our being. The Greeks called man "anthropos," meaning the upward-looking one. "Man is the creature of religious instincts, and must worship something," is the pronouncement of Kant. If dogmatism be sufferable anywhere, surely it is here; for man, wherever found, is a worshipping creature, capable of appreciating, capable of admiring, capable of extolling. That outburst of the soul, that rapture and rush of the emotions, that exclamation in the presence of the picturesque, that is the natural sentiment of worship. Education and study exalt it into a culture, revelation into a duty.

If there were no God, the human heart must make One, for where there is no vision of the Infinite, the people perish. Worship is a true soul-view of God; rather is it a soul-view of the true God. It is the highest admiration, because the admiration of the highest. Worship is worthship—a confession of worth. It is a reverential upward look. It is the attitude of the penitent rising and turning his face skyward.

¶ One of the most popular legends in Brittany is that relating to an imaginary town called Is, which is supposed to have been swallowed up by the sea at some unknown time. There are several places along the coast which are pointed out as the site of this imaginary city, and the fishermen have many strange tales to tell of it. According to them, the tips of the spires of the churches may be seen in the hollow of the waves when the sea is rough, while during a calm the music of the bells, ringing out a hymn appropriate to the day, rises above the waters. I often fancy that I have at the bottom of my heart a city of Is, with its bells

[1] R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, ii. 71.

calling to prayer a recalcitrant congregation. At times I halt to listen to these gentle vibrations, which seem as if they came from immeasurable depths, like voices from another world.[1]

2. Our social instincts cry out for common worship. "They said unto me, Let us go." There is one thing in the services of the sanctuary that cannot otherwise be obtained. It is the social element in worship. The individual peculiarity is toned down in the general praise and prayer. The individual burden is forgotten in the common thanksgiving. The tempted, overburdened heart finds release in the assembling together with other souls. The solitary stranger, joining in praise and sharing the communal life of the congregation, forgets for the time his solitude. There is something infectious in the spiritual sense of so many wills gathered together with one accord. The social element in worship is not only part of the gregarious instinct, but in the convergence of many wills on one undertaking it produces a volume of prayers that is far greater than the sum of individual prayers would be. There is action and reaction of spiritual influences. This is perhaps most noticeable in great evangelistic meetings or spiritual conventions, where deep religious emotions are stirred up, and where waves of spiritual influence may almost be felt. But it is true, more or less, of every congregational group. Different hymns appeal to different minds and stir up different reactions. Different verses of the passages of the Bible which are read touch different natures and appeal to different experiences. One sentence in a prayer finds its way into one heart, another into another. The wistful, the weary, the colourless, the jubilant, the successful, the defeated draw from the service their cognate note. Each life-experience seems to attract as by a spiritual magnet its kindred thought.

We may rightly ask people to consider what is likely to be the effect of the neglect or disuse on a large scale of the worship of God. Doubtless it may mean a very little difference to individuals. We may let our worship be so poor and mechanical that the loss of it makes at the moment little difference. It is the way of such things that they mean little to those who use them little. But, even so, in the bulk they are worth a great

[1] E. Renan, *Recollections of my Youth*, p. vii.

deal. We make each our contribution, or fail to make it, to the nation's worship, and through this to its higher life. This at the least; but how much more if worship is rightly used, if it brings the sense of God's presence and the touch of eternal things, if conscience is brought weekly to the bar; if will and purpose receive reminder and encouragement, if worship is allowed to give that which is to be found in it by those who seek.

¶ The boy was expressing the opinion of many older than himself when he said to his mother, "I should like to be just such a Christian as father is, for no one can tell whether he is a Christian or not." This father is like the clock attached to a certain church, which possessed neither face nor hands, but which was wound up by the sexton on Sundays and continued to tick year after year, affording an apt illustration of the religion which many are content to possess. The movements of the clock were as regular and accurate as anyone could desire, but, inasmuch as it kept the time to itself, no one was the better for its existence.[1]

3. Our highest moral life requires the open acknowledgment of God. If a man does not know and remember how much is above him, he will see nothing true. He will begin by thinking himself big, and end by finding himself and everything else little. He must look up because the truth of his nature is to belong and to depend. He cannot stand alone. His own strength is weakness. He is strong or wise only by what is given him, and put into him. Or he will begin by thinking he can do everything, and come to think that he can do nothing, and that there is nothing to do that is really worth doing. He must look up because the best in us is not what we are, but what we aspire to be. A man who does not look up has no ideals, no sense of mystery; he lacks reverence, and reverence is the essence of manhood. Without it life is dry, and petty and vulgar.

The Church stands for the most vital thing in life—the art of teaching men how to live. On creeds and articles the minds of men have always differed, and there is no sure evidence forthcoming that the future will not repeat the past; but right and wrong are as old as Orion and its nebulæ. Right will never lose its lustre; never wrong its shame. Repeatedly we hear the

[1] C. H. Robinson.

criticism made that the Church is narrow; but how otherwise could she be? Is she not the only organization in the world to-day that stands for unflinching antagonism to wrong? Abolish the Church and the supremacy of evil would be unchallenged, the field abandoned, and Satan have his own wicked swing.

¶ Many years ago a merchant in Liverpool became financially involved, through no fault of his own, and had to come to a settlement with his creditors. He gave up everything and went to live in a small house with his wife and children. He came to church regularly twice each Sunday, and with him all his family. As the years passed his business grew and prospered, and in due time he called his creditors together, paid his debts with interest and stepped forth a free man. His creditors made him a valuable presentation of silver in recognition of his splendid fight and his sterling and honourable character. That man told me he could not have held on, or held out in the dark days that fell upon him and his, but for the courage which came to him through the services of the Church, and the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. He trusted in God and he was not confounded.[1]

## II.

### The Place of Worship.

**"Let us go unto the house of the Lord."**

"The house of the Lord" is an expression which we at once recognize as figurative. "Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded!" So it was said even in the Jewish dispensation. In the Christian dispensation it is still more strongly expressed that the only fitting temple of the Most High is the sacred human conscience, or the community of good men throughout the world, or that vast unseen universe which is the true tabernacle, greater and more perfect than any made by hands. Nevertheless, like all familiar metaphors the expression "the house of God" has a deep root in the human heart and mind. Our idea of the invisible almost inevitably makes for itself a shell or husk from visible things. This is the germ of religious architecture. This is the reason why

[1] T. J. Madden, in *The Record*, Feb. 7, 1913, p. 126.

the most splendid buildings in the world have been temples or churches. This is the reason why even the most spiritual, even the most puritanical, religion clothes itself with the drapery not only of words, and sounds, and pictures, but of wood, and stone, and marble. A Friends' meeting-house is as really a house of God, and therefore as decisive a testimony to the sacredness of architecture, as the most magnificent cathedral.

1. There is a value in the association of religion with places. That value lies in the help which material things can be to the spiritual life of beings who have material forms. The wholly spiritual is at present unattainable by us. We are compelled to shape the spiritual in formal words, and to present the spiritual in material images. The sacraments are based on this value of sensible helps to spiritual feeling. And so historic and beautiful church-buildings cultivate reverence; familiar services nourish the spirit of worship; the church we have attended since childhood, or in which we have felt the power of Divine things, readily quickens emotion and renews faith. The hermit who retires even from hallowing associations does but make new ones for himself, for none of us can afford to neglect the help that sacred places and things may be to us.

¶ An unfamiliar instance of special interest in sacred places was given by Professor Minas Teheraz to the "World's Parliament." Speaking of the Armenian Church, he said: "One result of the manifold persecutions has been to strengthen the attachment of the Armenians to the Church of St. Gregory, the Illuminator. Etchmiadzin has become a word of enchantment, graven in the soul of every Armenian. The Armenians of the mother country bow down with love before this sanctuary which has already seen 1591 summers. And as regards those who have left their native land, if it is far from their eyes it is not far from their hearts. A Persian monarch, Shah Abbas, had forcibly transported into his dominion fourteen thousand Armenian families. Like the captive Israelites at the remembrance of Jerusalem, these Armenians always sighed at the recollection of Etchmiadzin. In order to keep them in their new country, Shah Abbas conceived the project of destroying Etchmiadzin, of transporting the stones to Djoulfa (Ispahan), and there constructing a similar convent. He actually transported the central stone of the chief altar, the baptismal fonts, and other important pieces,

but the emotion of the Armenians was so great that he was forced to give up his project of vandalism." [1]

2. God is not tied to particular places. He is not confined to temples made with hands, and in all ages and lands devout souls alone with God in the mountain or the valley or the unpeopled desert have been able to worship Him with great concentration in the solitudes of nature. Nor does it obviate private and personal prayer. "When thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret" is Jesus' prescription for personal devotion. The true believer prays naturally to God for help, for grace, rendering thanks, taking counsel with God. The sources of his strength are found mainly in his private prayers.

One of the grandest features of Christianity is its cosmopolitanism. It finds a home everywhere, and is everywhere at home. In this it differs from Paganism, which must have its hallowed groves ere the oracular response can be gained. It is unlike Judaism also, which had its solitary Temple where alone the symbol of Divinity was displayed. In the memorable conversation which our Saviour had with the woman of Samaria, He emphasized the superiority of the Christian religion. "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." That is, neither here nor there by way of restriction—the genius of the gospel is too expansive to limit itself to a solitary shrine. There is to be no tabernacle of exclusive worship, but anywhere and everywhere men may rear a temple, and the Lord God will dwell in it.

It is the life of the members, and not the form of structure, that makes a Church living. It is as each one is a temple of the Holy Ghost that the combined brotherhood becomes a Christian Church in the highest sense. It is the spirit of prayer and service pervading the people that makes a Church distinguished. The quickened heart, to give for others money, service, self, is a mark of the living Church. Devotion to the service of man in the house of God draws out the most devoted talent of the best men and women. In the great Christian lands there is a large army of Christian workers in every living congregation on whom,

[1] R. Tuck.

rather than on the minister, devolves the management of the various activities of the church. Behind them are the main body of the people aiding by prayer and effort. These are the living stones.

¶ Why not then worship only in the open air? Convenience forbids it as the normal form of worship. Why not worship in a barn? Is God not there? Yea, verily. And in times of persecution in the past, in Scotland and other lands, men and women have been glad to worship anywhere—in caves, on the mountainside, in barns, or any shelter that offered. But in settled times Christian people, animated by the same feeling as King David expressed, felt that it was unfitting to worship God in circumstances less worthy than they themselves possessed. Their gratitude to God, and their own æsthetic tastes, dictated tasteful churches, simple yet elegant, rich in hallowed associations, solemnized by spiritual transactions between the soul and God.[1]

3. A common centre of worship promotes unity and brotherhood. It was a national religion that was celebrated and reinforced during these pilgrimages to Jerusalem. The little village synagogue was a temporary makeshift, the Temple at Jerusalem was the house of worship. In the former the religious heart was fed but not satisfied. Life was maintained, duty was taught, but there was neither the beauty of holiness nor the glory of God that was enshrined in the central Temple. In a way, the throne of David was set right in the middle of the Temple. The law of the land and its administration issued from the Jewish Church. The arrangements of social life issued from the Jewish Church. The regulations of commerce issued from the Jewish Church. And so the Jew was glad as he went up to Zion because king and court, social convention and social habit, the rulers of commerce, all found their inspiration and their mandate in the Church.

¶ There was a time in Scotland when the Church stood immediately behind the King's throne as counsellor, when the Church regulated the homes of men, and their habits, when the Church conducted commercial treaties, when the Church granted charters to boroughs. All that is now changed in Scotland. It is so much changed that some say the Church has become little more than a mere relic in this land. It is so much changed that some declare the province of the Church is so limited as to be on

[1] *Alexander Tomory, Indian Missionary*, 77.

the point of disappearing altogether; but I think I read the signs of the times sufficiently accurately when I declare that again in our time the conviction is deepening and growing apace that a nation can be strong in the various aspects of its life, its social life, its commercial life, its political life, only as it is infused with those ideals and eternal verities that are summed up in the name of religion.[1]

## III.

### The Spirit of Worship.

**"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of the Lord."**

The Hebrew poet was sure of one thing—that it did him good to go into the House of God. For though God is always near us, so that we cannot get away from Him though we may close our hearts and lock our doors, yet in public worship we are drawn closer to God. We come into His very presence, we seek to look into His face, we desire to enter into His pavilion and into the secret of His tabernacle. Our hearts are stirred, and, like the disciples of old, we feel that the flame of love is fanned as He talks to us and allows us to talk to Him.

¶ Oliver Wendell Holmes does not hesitate to bear witness to the need, in his own case, of the weekly "means of grace." He says: "I am a regular church-goer. I should go for various reasons if I did not love it, but I am fortunate enough to find pleasure in the midst of devout multitudes, whether I can accept all their creed or not. For I find there is in the corner of my heart 'a little plant called Reverence,' which wants to be watered about once a week."

¶ Better known, perhaps, than that of any other Christian household, is the domestic life of Gregory Nazianzen, the poet of Eastern Christendom, and one of the greatest of its orators and theologians. Gregory's mother, Nonna, a woman of ardent piety, born of a Christian family, and carefully trained in the faith, was "a housewife after Solomon's own heart"—so her son describes her—"submissive to her husband, yet not ashamed to be his guide and teacher." It was Nonna's constant prayer that her husband, Gregory, should become a convert, for, though a man of high

[1] A. B. Scott.

character and exemplary life, he was a pagan. A dream inspired by a psalm helped her to gain her heart's desire. Pagan though he was, her husband seems to have known the Psalms, for he dreamed that he was singing the words, "I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the House of the Lord" (Ps. cxxii.). The impression was too deep to pass away when he awoke. After a short preparation, he was baptized, and eventually became, and for forty-five years remained, Bishop of Nazianzus (329–74).[1]

1. If we take the psalm as referring to the return from the Captivity we may imagine how the pilgrim would express his delight at finding himself once more in sight or in prospect of home. The psalms and prophecies of the time describe the delight with which the travellers started on their westward journey; how they mounted ridge after ridge, and caught the first view of their own country; how the beacon-fires flashing from their native hills welcomed them onwards; how at last their feet stood fast "within thy gates, O Jerusalem." This is one part of the feeling of the return of the exiles, and it became the root of that patriotic sentiment which flourished henceforth in the Jewish nation with a vigour never known before.

There is another feeling in the background, which gives additional force to this passionate home-sickness and patriotic fervour. They had not merely been absent from home. They had been sojourning in a mighty empire wholly unlike their own. They had seen the splendours of Babylon; they had mixed with the princes and potentates of Chaldea, Persia, and Media; they had drunk in all the influences of those far-off seats of Oriental wisdom. Their ideas of religion, of history, and of science had become enlarged. If in some respects they were a lesser nation than they were before the Exile, in some respects they were much greater. For they had received a new and serious impulse which ended in nothing less than the greatest event of the world's history—the advent of Christianity.

¶ There has not been a generation of men for the last three thousand years, there will not be a generation of men to the end of time, in which some will not read with sympathy that story on which the greatest master of ancient poetry has spent all his art—which tells of the return of Ulysses after his long absence;

[1] R. E. Prothero, *The Psalms in Human Life*, 15.

the wife counting the weary days in the hills of Ithaca; the dog leaping up in his master's face and dying of joy; the aged servants recognizing their long-lost chief as he treads once more his father's threshold. To any man worthy of the name, the thoughts of mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, are among the most inspiring, the most purifying, the most elevating of all the motives which God has given us to steady our steps, and guide our consciences, and nerve us for duty, through all the changes and chances of this mortal life. Happy, thrice happy, is he or she who keeps this sanctuary pure and undefiled. False to his country, and false to the true interests and the holy progress of mortals, is he or she who undermines or betrays it. Not charity only, but all the virtues of which charity is the bond begin and end at Home.[1]

2. The Psalmist was glad because he approached God as a son and not as a slave. We delight in the services of the House of God when we realize that the Great God Himself is pleased with the spiritual sacrifice, the offering of prayer and praise and thanksgiving and intercession which we bring. We must remember that our God is a Father, and "Father" is the name whereby He especially manifests Himself to us. A King He is of course; a Judge too, a Revealer, a Saviour, even a Friend; but, beyond and above all, He is a Father. And when we really grasp the idea of His Fatherhood, it is not so difficult for us to understand the feelings with which He regards the approaches of His children to His sacred presence.

¶ I can imagine a monarch seated on high, on his throne, looking coldly down upon his subjects, and receiving with little or no emotion but that of a gratified pride, and of a resolve to have his due, the presents which they pour out profusely at his feet. But if the monarch were also a father the circumstances would be radically altered, and I should expect the feeblest offering, if it were but really made in love, to find favour in his eyes; just as I expect that whilst the great Sovereign of the universe listens with complacency to the glorious hymns and anthems of the hosts of heaven, He finds perhaps a sweeter music in the lispings of a little child, or in the broken utterances of a penitent sinner just turning from his sin, and scarcely able at present to believe that he will be accepted, or in the worship of such people as we are, offering our sacrifice sincerely, offering it

[1] A. P. Stanley, *Sermons on Special Occasions*, 111.

in the name of Jesus Christ, but yet painfully conscious of the imperfection with which we realize unseen and eternal things, and of the wandering thoughts which so frequently drag our souls down from the heights of spiritual contemplation to engage them with the veriest trifles of the passing moment.[1]

¶ When upon the battle-field we receive our dying comrade's last message to his wife, when we pass in the rude hospital from one sufferer to another, when with a few we have to sacrifice life without one single hope of being saved, that we may keep a post for the safety of an army: we do not speak then of a God of ideas, of an impersonal Essence of Love and Truth, but of a living, loving Friend, who will be a Father to the widow, who stands, as if in human form, and speaks in human voice to the wounded who is torn with pain, to the doomed who dies, unknown, for duty. In such hours the Idealist worships the personal Fatherhood of God. Go to the poor mechanic who has worked all his life in a city garret, and talk of the God who is infinite Life in Nature; go to men at some great crisis, when their work has broken up, when their heart is broken, and speak of the pitiless action of Force, and the hard fighter with the real ills of poverty, or the tortured man, will mock at your consolation. "When I ask bread," he will say, "you give me a stone." But tell them of a personal Father who loves and pities them, who chastens because He loves, whose tenderness goes hand in hand with justice, who sits with them at the bench, and bears, through sympathy, their poverty: who knows their suffering, and will not leave them or forsake them in the hour of their bitter need; who is human to them with a higher, tenderer humanity than any they can get on earth, and I know their eyes will light with hope, their spirits take a Divine courage, their patience grow so beautiful that all around will see that there is a higher Power there than earthly gratitude.[2]

3. In true worship, reverence and intelligent interest must be joined to enthusiasm. Indeed we cannot have worship without reverence. Reverence is the very essence of true religion, and therefore wherever reverence is wanting there can be no true worship. The belief of the Gospel, which implies the possession by us of Jesus as our Saviour from sin and death, should make us glad—glad with a great, deep joy of which the world knows nothing. But a happy or glad heart is not opposed to, or inconsistent with, a devout and reverent spirit; and however great may

[1] G. Calthrop. [2] Stopford A. Brooke.

be our joy in communion with God, we ought to be reverent when we come before Him.

One cannot help wondering that some people who do go to the House of God should go at all, they show so little interest in the services. You see their want of interest even in the manner in which they go to their pews; and you see it further in their habit of gazing around them at the gathering worshippers before the services begin, and in their vacant look during the time the services are going on. With them, church-going is a mere religious form. They resemble the Northern Farmer of whom Tennyson tells us in one of his poems, who said about his minister—

An' I hallus coom'd to 's chooch afoor moy Sally wur deäd,
An' 'eärd 'um a bummin' awaäy loike a buzzard-clock ower my 'eäd,
An' I niver knaw'd whot a meän'd but I thowt a 'ad summut to saäy,
An' I thowt a said whot a owt to 'a said an' I coom'd awaäy.

¶ One of the best men whom I have ever known, a man of great intellectual gifts and acquirements, who had cherished through life the most exalted views of God, and much of whose time was spent on his knees in prayer, as he drew near the close of his life felt a sense of awe almost amounting to fear—though he had no doubt of his safety—as he thought of entering into the presence of God. Yes, and the more holy anyone really becomes—the more anyone knows about God—the more like to God anyone becomes, the greater will be his reverence for God, the more solemnized will he feel when in God's presence.[1]

4. The Psalmist's gladness was inspired by the feeling that he was a member of a goodly fellowship. He has his eye upon the past. He is regarding the days that are gone, as he mounts up this road to Jerusalem; as his own feet trace the way that leads up to Zion he finds there footprints of vanished generations of God's own pilgrim people, and in his mind's eye he finds himself enrolled in the august procession of God's own people that, going up this road before him in past days, have found it the road of duty, the road of salvation, the road of their soul's peace; and so he says "I have joy." He had the joy which is begotten in us by

[1] W. Duncan, *God's Book: God's Day: God's House*, 84.

the communion of saints; he had the gladness which is engendered in us by what the writer to the Hebrews calls being "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses."

¶ To this house we come, drawn not by arbitrary command which we fear to disobey; not by self-interest, temporal or spiritual, which we deem it prudent to consult; not, I trust, from dead conventionalism, that brings the body and leaves the soul; but by a common quest of some holy spirit to penetrate and purify our life; by a common desire to quit its hot and level dust, and from its upland slopes of contemplation inhale the serenity of God; by the secret sadness of sin, that can delay its confessions, and bear its earthliness no more; by the deep though dim consciousness that the passing weeks do not leave us where they find us, but plant us within nearer distance, and give us a more intimate view, of that fathomless eternity wherein so many dear and mortal things have dropped from our imploring eyes. It is no wonder that in meditations solemn as these we love and seek each other's sympathy. It is easy, no doubt, to journey alone in the broad sunshine and on the beaten highways of our lot: but over the midnight plain, and beneath the still immensity of darkness, the traveller seeks some fellowship for his wanderings. And what is religion but the midnight hemisphere of life, whose vault is filled with the silence of God, and whose everlasting stars, if giving no clear light, yet fill the soul with dreams of immeasurable glory? It will be an awful thing to each of us to be alone, when he takes the passage from the mortal to the immortal, and is borne along—with unknown time for expectant thought—through the space that severs earth from heaven: and till then, at least, we will not part, but speak with the common voice of supplicating trust of that which awaits us all.[1]

¶ When religious worship has become a customary social act, a man who sympathizes with the religious idea is right to show public sympathy with it; he ought to weigh very carefully his motives for abstaining. If it is indolence, or a fear of being thought precise, or a desire to be thought independent, or a contempt for sentiment that keeps him back, he is probably in the wrong; nothing but a genuine and deep-seated horror of formalism justifies him in protesting against a practice which is to many an avenue of the spiritual life. A lack of sympathy with certain liturgical expressions, a fear of being hypocritical, of being believed to hold the orthodox position in its entirety, justifies a man in not entering the ministry of the Church, even

[1] James Martineau, *Endeavours after the Christian Life*, 138.

if he desires on general grounds to do so, but these are paltry motives for cutting oneself off from communion with believers. It is clear that Christ Himself thought many of the orthodox practices of the exponents of the popular religion wrong, but He did not for that reason abjure attendance upon accustomed rites; and it is far more important to show sympathy with an idea, even if one does not agree with all the details, than to seem, by protesting against erroneous detail, to be out of sympathy with the idea. The mistake is when a man drifts into thinking of ceremonial worship as a practice specially and uniquely dear to God. There are some who have a quickened sense of fellowship and unity, when prayers and aspirations are uttered in concert; but the error is to desire merely the bodily presence of one's fellow-creatures for such a purpose, rather than their mental and spiritual acquiescence. The result of such a desire is that it is often taught, or at all events believed, that there is a kind of merit in the attendance at public worship. The only merit of it lies in the case of those who sacrifice a personal disinclination to the desire to testify sympathy for the religious life. It is no more meritorious for those who personally enjoy it, than it is for a lover of pictures to go to a picture-gallery, for thus the hunger of the spirit is satisfied.[1]

[1] A. C. Benson, *The Silent Isle*, 63.

# Sowing in Tears, Reaping in Joy.

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## Sowing in Tears, Reaping in Joy.

**Though he goeth on his way weeping, bearing forth the seed;**
**He shall come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him.**
**Ps. cxxvi. 6.**

This is a song of grateful remembrance celebrating the return of the Jews from exile. But though it begins, as so many of the psalms do, with a local reference, it ends with a general application to universal human life. The end of the Captivity came unexpectedly; the singer declares that it was like a dream to them; they could hardly believe at first that it was true. But when they were sure that they were awake, and that the long exile was really over, that they were going home again to rebuild the Temple, and the city of their pride and love, their mouths were filled with laughter and their voices burst forth into singing. Gratitude towards God swelled their hearts; they gave God all the glory; they bore testimony before the heathen that it was God who had done these great things for them. Studying this signal illustration of the sweetness of victory after defeat, of the blessedness of home after exile, of the glory of the harvest after the long seedtime and waiting, the singer bursts forth into inspired poetry, drawing from this illustration a beautiful truth applicable to human life in general, and of special spiritual significance to those who seek to bless and uplift human hearts. "They that sow in tears," he sings with confidence, "shall reap in joy. Though he goeth on his way weeping, bearing forth the seed; he shall come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him."

¶ Some one has said that the finest example of the use in English literature of a quotation from the Bible is the reference to this text in Thackeray's *Esmond*. Entering Winchester Cathedral on his return from the wars, Harry Esmond sees again the widowed Lady Castlewood, who in his youth had been to him more than sister and mother, and whom he now loves as a woman.

The period of their separation is ended. "I knew," she says to him at the close of the service, "that you would come back. And to-day, Henry, in the anthem, when they sang it, 'When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream,' I thought, yes, like them that dream—them that dream. And then it went, 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy; and he that goeth forth and weepeth, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bring his sheaves with him'; I looked up from the book, and saw you. I was not surprised when I saw you. I knew you would come, my dear, and saw the gold sunshine round your head. . . . But now—now you are come again, bringing your sheaves with you, my dear." She burst into a wild flood of weeping as she spoke; she laughed and sobbed on the young man's heart, crying out wildly, "Bringing your sheaves with you —your sheaves with you!"[1]

## I.

### Sowing in Tears.

1. The sower is represented as weeping. The language here is very strong. One commentator puts it in this form, "may indeed weep every step that he goes." It has also been rendered, "takes no step of his way without weeping." Dr. Thomson, the author of *The Land and the Book*, in giving an interpretation of the Psalmist's words, says: "I never saw people sowing in tears exactly, but have often known them to do it in fear and distress sufficient to draw them from any eye. In seasons of great scarcity, the poor peasants part in sorrow with every measure of precious seed cast into the ground. It is like taking bread out of the mouths of their children; and in such times many bitter tears are actually shed over it. The distress is actually so great that government is obliged to furnish seed, or none would be sown. Ibrahim Pasha did this more than once within my remembrance."

In all of this there is much to make sowing sad work. Again, the extreme danger to which the sower was exposed made his labour one of sadness. Dr. Thomson tells us that the sower was often obliged to drop the plough and seize the sword. His fields were far from his home, and so near the lawless desert. As in

[1] W. M. Thackeray, *The History of Henry Esmond*, Bk. ii. chap. vi.

Job's day, when the oxen were ploughing and the asses feeding beside them, the Sabeans came and took them all away, so often since fierce hordes from the deserts have swept down upon the peaceful husbandman, and robbed him of seed and implements, sparing only his life. In all of this there was much to make the work of sowing also a work of weeping. Again, the frequent fruitlessness of the labour made it sad toil. The land had gone to weeds. The ground was fallow. It was no easy task to break up this stubborn soil. Their once fruitful land was barren, and its cultivation was a work of the utmost toil. Their implements were poor and inefficient, their oxen were small and weak, and their own skill was very unlike that of the farmer of modern days. For these and similar reasons the sowing of the seed might literally be called a work of weeping.

2. It is a law of the spiritual life that through tribulation we enter into the joy of the Kingdom. God means us to reap in joy, but first we must sow in tears. See, for example, how this law meets us at the very threshold of the Christian life. Great though the blessedness to which Christ invites us is, the beginnings of His life in the soul come to us amid tears. Then for the first time we see the mystery of the cross; and what strikes us, in what we see, is the spectacle of a Saviour there for us. We see the wounds in His body, but, behind these, wounds in ourselves, for the healing of which He died. No one ever truly opens his eyes on these facts who does not weep. Sharp and into the very heart goes the pangs; "It is I who have crucified the Lord!"

¶ Contemplation of Christ's sufferings, combined with prayer, will do more than any other exercise to cause genuine sorrow for having offended the love of God. . . . In following the scenes of the Passion, contemplate our Lord as the sin-bearer, and think of each insult, or indignity suffered by Him as representing to us the penalties due to our own offences. . . . Thus we come to feel the stirrings of real sorrow for having rejected God's love. Moved by that sorrow, we take our place beside Him in His Passion, enduring our small sufferings cheerfully, uniting our half-hearted penitence with His Divine, all-comprehensive sorrow, whereby it can be deepened, and strengthened, and purified.[1]

[1] Bishop Chandler, *Ara Coeli.*

3. Then the thought of the shortcomings of our service is enough to moisten the driest eye. That in a sin-stricken world so much needs to be done is bad enough, but that we should so often leave undone the very little we can do, that we should let the ground around us lie fallow or run to weed, that we should permit the forces of sin to do their worst while we are content to do nothing at all, is infinitely worse. We must be stony-hearted indeed if such thoughts as these never cause a pang at our breast or a tear in our eye.

¶ There is nothing more grateful in the service of Christ than *spontaneity*—nothing more welcome to Himself, nothing more welcome to His servants. To have some services offered, to know of some kind deed done, quite apart from any pressure or appeal or even suggestion—that is so like Jesus that it is a joy to think of it. We are so ready to wait till someone moves, instead of following unbidden the first impulse of our hearts; we are so inclined to act only under the spur or the whip; we are so ready to criticize instead of helping, that *willingness* is a cardinal virtue indeed.[1]

4. Lastly, there is the sorrow of disappointment. All earnest labourers are liable to fits of despondency, Christian labourers certainly not less than others. Overwork, perhaps, is followed by reaction, or the too eager hope is disappointed because we do not see any results for all our doing. We think that our fellow-labourers are not as earnest as we, that we alone are bearing the burden and heat of the day. Then there comes up the question, What is the use of all our toil? the murmur, "Verily I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain." The whole world seems weary; all effort appears but restlessness; there is no profit to all the labour that is done under the sun. One generation passeth away and another cometh; life is too short for hope, too short for any effective effort. "The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down"; "all the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full"; "all things are full of labour; man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun."

[1] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 86.

We pass; the path that each man trod
Is dim, or will be dim, with weeds:
What fame is left for human deeds
In endless age?

Therefore we hate life; "because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto" us; "for all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Yet for all our despondency, the call to labour ceases not. If we would not be faithless to all we have known of duty and of God; if we would not be false to all we have learnt of life, and to every principle by which our souls are moulded, we must do the work that lies ready to our hands. We have taken up the basket, and the furrows are still yawning to receive the seed: we must sow, though we sow in despondency and in tears. God's great call to us is to labour, and His call to labour continues though there is no joy to us in working. But it is still God's call, and not our gladness, that is to give character to our lives; the claim of duty ceases not with our impulses of joyful work.

¶ Lessons of persevering toil, of contented doing of preparatory work, of confidence that no such labour can fail to be profitable to the doer and to the world, have been drawn for centuries from the sweet words of this psalm. Who can tell how many hearts they have braced, how much patient toil they have inspired? The Psalmist was sowing seed the fruit of which he little dreamed of when he wrote them, and his sheaves will be an exceeding weight indeed. The text gives assurance fitted to animate to toil in the face of dangers without, and in spite of a heavy heart—namely, that no seed sown and watered with tears is lost; and further, that, though it often seems to be the law for earth that one soweth and another reapeth, in deepest truth "every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour," inasmuch as, hereafter, if not now, whatsoever of faith and toil and holy endeavour a man soweth, trusting to God to bless the springing thereof, that shall he also reap. In the highest sense and in the last result the prophet's great words are ever true: "They shall not plant, and another eat . . . for my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands."[1]

¶ I saw in seedtime a husbandman at plough in a very raining day; asking him the reason why he would not rather leave off

[1] A. Maclaren, *The Book of Psalms*, 321.

than labour in such foul weather, his answer was returned to me in their country rhyme:

Sow beans in the mud,
And they'll come up like a wood.

This could not but mind me of David's expression, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." These last five years have been a wet and woful seedtime to me, and many of my afflicted brethren. Little hope have we, as yet, to come again to our own homes, and, in a literal sense, now to bring our sheaves, which we see others daily carry away on their shoulders. But if we shall not share in the former or latter harvest here on earth, the third and last in heaven we hope undoubtedly to receive.[1]

Sow;—while the seeds are lying
In the warm earth's bosom deep,
And your warm tears fall upon it—
They will stir in their quiet sleep;
And the green blades rise the quicker,
Perchance, for the tears you weep.

Then sow;—for the hours are fleeting,
And the seed must fall to-day;
And care not what hands shall reap it,
Or if you shall have passed away
Before the waving corn-fields
Shall gladden the sunny day.

Sow; and look onward, upward,
Where the starry light appears—
Where in spite of the coward's doubting,
Or your own heart's trembling fears,
You shall reap in joy the harvest
You have sown to-day in tears.[2]

## II.

### Reaping in Joy.

Now comes the promise—"He shall come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him." We have here in the Hebrew a striking

[1] Thomas Fuller, *Good Thoughts in Worse Times.*
[2] A. A. Procter, *Legends and Lyrics*, i. 134.

form of expression. It is the combination of the finite tense with the infinitive; it is difficult in our idiom to bring out the exact thought. In some versions it is rendered, "Coming, he shall come." This, however, conveys neither the peculiar form nor the precise sense of the Hebrew phrase. Luther's repetition of the finite tense, most scholars are agreed, gives us the best approximation to the force of the original, "He shall come, he shall come." The certainty of His coming again is the thought; this is what our common version, with its "shall doubtless come again," clearly teaches.

1. The sower shall shout in the joy of his harvest. He goes forth in the dull winter when leaden clouds hang overhead, and the wild winds moan dismally, and the rain-showers sweep suddenly upon him, and the dead leaves are swept by every gust, and the trees stretch up their bare black arms to heaven. But though it begins thus, it has another ending. There comes the happy time when the row of reapers bend over the falling corn; when they that bind the sheaves are busy, and others pile the shocks; when the laden waggons go homewards with the precious burden, and about the farmsteads are they who build the stacks. Then shall the sower come again. He who went out with handfuls shall come back with armfuls. He who scattered seed shall gather sheaves. He who went out with a basket shall come with a waggon-load.

¶ At Clanwilliam he heard some wonderful and well-authenticated instances of the marvellous fertility of the soil near the Oliphants River, where in good seasons the land yields even two-hundredfold. Mr. Fryer, one of the churchwardens, had himself seen "a stool of wheat which, after successive cuttings, had thrown out 320 stalks"; and knew of a particular crop which was even more wonderful: A farmer sowed ¼ of a muid, or sack, of corn; the river overflowed and he reaped 57 sacks! He found rather a difficulty in disposing of it all, and next year he did not sow. But grain shed by the harvest of the previous year, and escaping the appetites of the birds, actually produced, after another overflow of the river, a self-sown harvest of 72 sacks; *i.e.* the farmer, with one sowing and one ploughing, reaped in two years, from ¼ sack of seed 129 sacks of corn! 516 fold! This is vouched for by several persons.[1]

[1] *A Father in God: W. W. Jones, Archbishop of Capetown*, 93.

2. The spiritual harvest is assured to us on the same authority as assures the earthly harvest. He who has never broken His first promise, "seedtime and harvest shall not cease," will never break His second, "they that sow in tears shall reap in joy." There is no joy like that which comes from successful work for Christ. All the joys of earth are nothing when compared with this. This endures; this allies us to angels and God. This awakens the purest and noblest instincts of the soul. In this joy we feel the throb of Christ's heart. The promise to Him is that "he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." This joy is mingled even with the gloom of Gethsemane and Calvary. It was for the joy set before Him that He endured the cross and despised the shame.

¶ Most of the thoughts that cluster round the season of autumn are worn and common enough. No new ones can be spoken; we can only vary the key of the old. So when we think of harvest time, and of life's harvest being similar to it, we think a well-worn thought; but its very worn condition makes it dear, for it has been the constant thought of all our brother men. It is bound up with a thousand lovely poems in which the thoughts of solitary men took form, with a thousand lovely landscapes in which, by vintage and by cornland, human energy and human joy, the long day's labour and the moonlight dance were wrought together into happiness. Few sights are fairer than that seen autumn after autumn round many an English homestead, when, as evening falls, the wains stand laden among the golden stubble, and the gleaners are scattered over the misty field; when men and women cluster round the gathered sheaves and rejoice in the loving-kindness of the earth; when in the dewy air the shouts of happy people ring, and all over the broad moon shines down to bless with its yellow light the same old recurring scene it has looked on and loved for so many thousand years.[1]

3. "They that sow shall reap." The seed is God's, and God's too is the increase; only let us cast God's seed into God's soil, it matters not though we sow in tears, He will bless us with the harvest. God has His purpose in every call of duty; His purpose is to give us the blessedness of what we do. Were the work ours alone, were we left to do it by ourselves, were success dependent on our efforts or skill, then as we think how imperfect we are,

[1] Stopford A. Brooke.

and as we contemplate the powerful influences at work to hinder and mar the cause which we have at heart, we might well despair. But the word of the Lord standeth sure; God's promise cannot fail of fulfilment. The "shall come again" of the Omnipotent absolutely ensures success. Only sow faithfully, and you *shall* reap abundantly—here, if God sees it wise and well, hereafter, beyond all question. Yes, the harvest will come, *must* come. There may be cloudy skies, and dark days, and cold winds first—much that makes the sower anxious, and even causes weeping and painful fear; but still, the harvest *will* come.

¶ Every promise of God hath this tacitly annexed to it—"Is anything too hard for the Lord?"[1]

¶ The Methodist Chapel at Shotley Bridge, of which Mr. M'Cullagh became minister in 1849, was the only place of worship in this small village. One very interesting member of the congregation, a most godly woman, was the sister of that brilliant man of letters, De Quincey, the English opium-eater. A local preacher of much originality was also a prominent figure in the congregation. Mr. M'Cullagh in after years wrote of him: "Henderson's prayers were sometimes remarkable. Once I heard him quote the passage, 'The promise is unto you and to your children,' thus, 'The promise is unto Henderson and his children.' Some years afterwards I met one of his children in the ranks of the ministry, and I thought of the good man's faith in wedging his own name and his children's into the promise. Once when I was preaching on the text, 'Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises,' as I quoted one promise after another, Henderson half-audibly said, 'That is mine! and that is mine! and that is mine!' And when I uttered the words, 'Having nothing, and yet possessing all things,' he said with added emphasis, 'and that is mine.'"[2]

[1] John Owen.

[2] *Thomas M'Cullagh*, by his Eldest Son, 62.

# The Gifts of Sleep.

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## The Gifts of Sleep.

**So he giveth unto his beloved sleep.—Ps. cxxvii. 2.**

This is a psalm of prosperity, and of how it comes. It is sung in the ear of those who boast themselves as able to command success. They have, to begin with, the common ambition to rear a home, to keep it safe, and to fill it with plenty. Since, however, they do not ask these things of God, they cannot be sure of them. If God does not work with them, their own labour will be lost. They may toil at the walls and find that the rain or the wind foils them. They may build on a peopled hill, and take turns to man the ramparts, and yet, by stealth or force, the city may be taken and their home wrecked. They may be up before dawn, and be busy until the light fails, only to sit down to a table where the very bread seems made of the pains by which it was earned. For nothing they have made themselves so anxious that they could not sleep when they would.

As a pendant to that bustling scene, we have this picture of peace. The figure is that of the man who cares only to do God's will and trusts God to work by him and for him. He lies under a canopy of Love Divine, with closed eyes, calm face, and restful hands. As we look, we seem to know that these sheltering walls are God-built; and that this peace is God-kept; and that God, with the morn, shall spread the table, and call His guest. All that the sleepless pant after, this man has, and he has his sleep too, both full and sound. "So"—by God Himself being builder, keeper, host—"he giveth unto his beloved sleep."

¶ Mrs. Browning has told us that there was no verse in the Book of Psalms which fell upon her ear with such comfort as this—

> Of all the thoughts of God that are
> Borne inward unto souls afar,

Along the Psalmist's music deep,
Now tell me if that any is,
For gift or grace, surpassing this—
"He giveth His beloved, sleep"?

The text yields three shades of meaning. In the one precious gift of sleep, there are really three givings—

I. The Giving of Sleep.
II. The Giving in Sleep.
III. The Giving by Sleep.

## I.

### The Giving of Sleep.

1. "He giveth unto his beloved sleep." The persons to whom this language must be taken to be addressed are the builders and the watchmen of the foregoing verse. For them God provided the gift of sleep. And the harder the building in the daytime, and the keener the watching while the sentry goes his round, the more certain is the man to value the blessing of slumber when God, in love, gives it to him. No doubt, "the sleep of the labouring man is sweet." But, if it be only genuine sleep, the boon is far richer when it comes after care than when it comes only after muscular fatigue. We all know how natural are the cries for sleep which Henry IV. is represented as pouring out when he contrasts the lighter woes of the poor, allowing the gift to come, with the heavier anxieties he endured, banishing it from his pillow.

¶ This is what Sancho Panza—the little Spanish peasant with the short legs who acted as squire to Don Quixote—said about sleep. Sancho's words were: "Now blessings light on him who first invented sleep! It covers a man all over, thoughts and all, like a cloak; it is meat for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, heat for the cold, and cold for the hot."[1]

¶ I cannot help my heart feeling heavy. I wonder during how many years of my life *bed* has been the one haven and longed-for forgetfulness of care. I do not mean that I have not had much, very much, that I am grateful for, of mere human pleasant-

[1] C. Jerdan, *Messages to the Children*, 195.

ness, but that, on the whole, the cares of the day have outweighed the joys and made one glad of bed as an escape. Truly, bed is a wonderful haven, and I do thank God for having given me through so many years *sleep*. "He giveth his beloved sleep"; may it not be in this lower sense as well as in the higher? I would fain think so; at least, I know His gift of sleep has been nothing less than a gift of life to me.[1]

¶ I sat up alone; two or three times I paid a visit to the children's room. It seemed to me, young mothers, that I understood you!—Sleep is the mystery of life; there is a profound charm in this darkness broken by the tranquil light of the night-lamp, and in this silence measured by the rhythmic breathings of two young sleeping creatures. It was brought home to me that I was looking on at a marvellous operation of nature, and I watched it in no profane spirit. I sat silently listening, a moved and hushed spectator of this poetry of the cradle, this ancient and ever new benediction of the family, this symbol of creation sleeping under the wing of God, of our consciousness withdrawing into the shade that it may rest from the burden of thought, and of the tomb, that Divine bed, where the soul in its turn rests from life. To sleep is to strain and purify our emotions, to deposit the mud of life, to calm the fever of the soul, to return into the bosom of maternal nature, thence to re-issue, healed and strong. Sleep is a sort of innocence and purification. Blessed be He who gave it to the poor sons of men as the sure and faithful companion of life, our daily healer and consoler.[2]

> When to soft sleep we give ourselves away,
> And in a dream as in a fairy bark
> Drift on and on through the enchanted dark
> To purple daybreak—little thought we pay
> To that sweet better world we know by day.
> We are clean quit of it, as is a lark
> So high in heaven no human eye can mark
> The thin swift pinion cleaving through the gray.
> Till we awake ill fate can do no ill,
> The resting heart shall not take up again
> The heavy load that yet must make it bleed;
> For this brief space the loud world's voice is still,
> No faintest echo of it brings us pain.
> How will it be when we shall sleep indeed?[3]

[1] *Life and Letters of Edward Thring*, ii. 29.
[2] *Amiel's Journal* (trans. by Mrs. Humphry Ward), 38.
[3] Thomas Bailey Aldrich.

2. Sleep, gift of love and more than golden, is but a word to stand for a rest yet sweeter and deeper. The blessing that drops as from the hovering hands of God upon the wearied frame is but the Amen to the better blessing breathed by the Spirit of God into the spirit of man. First He giveth His beloved peace of heart, and then comes the sign of it in the slumbering nerve and limb. This inner hush and rest is God's own gift and His dearest love-token. Well do we know that it is no easy boon from His overflowing hand. It is no less than the gift of Himself. He gave Himself to live in our nature and to be for ever one with us and one of us. He gave Himself to do our part and bear our curse. He is ceaselessly giving Himself to us in ruling our lot and touching our heart. Jesus gives each of us the privilege of John, and we are wooed to lie back on His breast and lose ourselves in Him. The moment we do so, His peace flows from His heart to our heart. He giveth His beloved sleep.

Peace within makes peace without. Where there is no disturbance in the heart, there can be none in the billows, there can be none in the storm. These may wanton furiously. Their wild sport may threaten shipwreck to the vessel. But God's sleep can exist amid them. It can hold in sweet oblivion the untroubled soul. And herein lies its chiefest virtue, its most refreshing use. Among storms and billows it is that the righteous man obtains the full blessedness of sleep. He cannot escape the troubles of life; they are part of the heritage of humanity. He is not exempt from business cares. He can claim no immunity from disaster and defeat. But in all perplexities and all distresses he enjoys the inestimable blessing of a quiet conscience at peace with man, at peace with God. And this will give him rest, refreshment, repose. After the longest and weariest day, he can lie down and lose all painful recollections in the untroubled atmosphere of sleep. For weary heads and aching hearts there is no remedy like this.

¶ How beautifully has the sleep of one at peace with God been represented in a well-known modern picture. The amphitheatre is crowded by a fierce and eager throng; tier after tier is lined with the cruel faces of those who have come there to see the Christian martyr torn to pieces by savage beasts. The arena is prepared. The hungry tiger leaps with impatient roar at the bars

of his cage, thirsting for blood. A slave pushes back the doors of the cell where lies the man doomed to death for his adherence to Christ, that he may come forth, and with his dying agonies make sport for the emperor, his court and the people. And what do you see there, as the door opens, and the cell of the martyr is disclosed? A youth sleeping peacefully, with the symbol of his faith clasped to his heart, and heaven's own sunshine resting on his face; for all is well between him and God. The death which he knew last night was to be met to-day has no terrors for him; he has made it "Christ to live," and shall find it "gain to die." Looking on that scene, we have a comment on the inspired verse, "Even so he giveth unto his beloved sleep."[1]

¶ Remember the last moments of a noble Scottish Covenanter, the Earl of Argyle—son of the Great Marquis—who was beheaded in 1685. An officer of State came to see him an hour before his execution, and found that he was taking his usual after-dinner sleep. The officer rushed home in a highly excited state, exclaiming, "Argyle within an hour of eternity, and sleeping as pleasantly as a child!"[2]

3. For the enjoyment of this deeper gift, as of the nightly rest, we must put ourselves in the way of it. We have to prepare a welcome for it. We have to let ourselves sleep. We cease from self; we resign responsibility for ourselves; we pass into God's hands. We are content to do His will and to wait His will. We are sure that His will, whatever it may be, is our true good. We trust a love and wisdom and might infinitely better than our own. Hence a peace that passeth all understanding—no care, no fear, no duty too hard, no trial too sore, death no longer a foe and judgment a welcome! Even God—the Giving God—could give His beloved no more; for bliss itself shall be but this same peace free from all dispeace and made fully aware of itself.

¶ Martyrs, confessors, and saints have tasted this rest, and counted themselves happy in that they endured. A countless host of God's faithful servants have drunk deeply of it amid the daily burden of a weary life—dull, commonplace, painful, or desolate. All that God has been to them, He is ready to be to you; He only asks that you should seek no other rest save in Him. It is a rest which has never failed those who honestly sought it. The heart once fairly given to God, with a clear

[1] Canon Bell, *The Name above every Name*, 237.
[2] C. Jerdan, *Messages to the Children*, 198.

conscience, a fitting rule of life, and a steadfast purpose of obedience, you will find a wonderful sense of rest coming over you. What once fretted you ceases to do so; former unworthy exciting pleasures cease to attract you. No miser ever so feared to lose his treasure as the faithful soul fears to lose this rest when once tasted. Such words may seem exaggeration to those who have not tried it; but the saints will tell you otherwise. St. Paul will tell you of a peace which passeth understanding; Jesus Christ tells you of His peace which the world can neither give nor take away, because it is God's gift only. Such peace may undergo many an assault, but it will but be confirmed thereby, and rise above all that would trouble it. He who has tasted it would not give it in exchange for all this life can give; and death is to him a passage from this rest to that of eternity.[1]

## II.

### Giving in Sleep.

There cannot be the slightest doubt that the English equivalent for the Hebrew words is, "He giveth to His beloved in sleep." "He giveth blessing to His beloved during sleep." If the words so rendered are less perfect rhythmically, and suggest a less beautiful meaning or no meaning at all, we cannot help it. Some may think that this is almost a wanton and needless interference with a verse rendered sacred by long association; but when we consider that it really is the deepest line in the poem, the line which sums up and expresses the central thought of the poet, that where it stands it is a highly original thought, a genuine poetic flash, and that the old rendering of it robs it of its freshness and makes it very commonplace, we feel bound to make a little sacrifice of association and soothing sound in the interest of truth and fact.

The theme of the Psalmist is that, apart from the Divine blessing and working, all human effort is vain. By his own unaided efforts man can effect nothing. Even in such a matter as the building of a house, where, apparently, the hands of man accomplish everything and God is not in evidence at all, it is really God who builds. He has supplied the material. He has

[1] Jean Nicolas Grou, *The Hidden Life of the Soul.*

supplied the mind and the strength by which the material is shaped and put in its place. The watchers on the walls of the city may be never so vigilant and active, and everything may seem to depend on their wakefulness and care; but unless God watches with them and through them, their vigilance will avail nothing.

Moreover, God works when men do not work at all. He blesses and prospers them without effort of their own. The builders go home after a hard day's toil and, laying themselves down to rest, get fresh strength for their work; and God, by giving them sleep, is really building the house. The guards on the city wall retire in turn and betake themselves to repose, and God by this gift of sleep is Himself watching all the while. He blesses all who love Him when they know it not. He blesses us and furthers the work of spiritual life while we work not, blesses us silently, as if in the watches of the night, when we are all unconscious of it. Yes, He giveth to His beloved in sleep.

¶ The whole thought has a certain kinship with the teaching of our Lord when He says, "Be not anxious for the morrow. Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." God blesses them, as it were, without effort of their own; they, as it were, dream through life. They are silent, receptive; He gives them beauty in their flower-sleep. Or perhaps it comes still closer to our Lord's beautiful parable of the silent, unseen, unconscious growth of the spiritual life, both in the soul of man and in the spread of His Kingdom in the world: "And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how."[1]

1. God's secret ministry is patent *in our infancy.* The little child is yet, so to say, asleep. His conscious environment is a very tiny and a very dreamy one. His heaven, as some one has said, "is only three feet high!" The familiar cares that are lying upon the hearts of those about him mean nothing for him; still less is he awake to the greater life that is passing out of doors. And that is as it should be. We would feel it unnatural if he understood too much of what went on about him. The

[1] E. B. Speirs, *A Present Advent*, 280.

things that occupy his elders' minds, the work of which their hands are full, ought to have no concern for him. It is right that he should be unconscious of all that. Watchers by a bedside may settle great affairs while the sleeper does not stir. And so, pillowed on innocence, the little child should be all unaware of the life that plays around it; so far as this goes, it should be asleep. All the while stooping over it there is a mother's love, and all the splendour of a mother's patience. Shielding it there is a father's strength, and to provide for all it needs, a father's labour. And it is clad, and fed with food convenient, and cradled to rest, and sheltered from the storm. And should it ail, the best skill in the city is urgently summoned to the tiny sufferer. What a wealth of love and of love's care is here, yet who more passive than that little infant! Have these small hands helped in the preparation? Has that new heart done any of the planning? Helpless it lies, and doomed to certain death, if life depended on its puny efforts. But God "giveth unto his beloved sleep."

¶ We cannot underrate the enormous importance of discipline and training in childhood and youth, nor the enormous importance of teaching children to help themselves; but how much of the influence which goes to mould our human nature in its early days, and to build it up, is of the silent sort—subtle influences from nature with which children have an inborn kinship; subtle influences from the impalpable atmosphere of home — nay, whisperings to the child's soul, we know not from whence; voices coming to them in their pure slumbers while they are still in the temple of first intuitions and innocence, and have not yet gone out to mingle in the deafening din of the busy world? "Samuel, Samuel": and Samuel, knowing not who calls, answered in his dreams, "Here am I."[1]

¶ You cast an acorn into the ground and for a time it lies as dead. But nature's hidden ministries gather round it. The humours of the earth begin to soften its dry husk; the gentle rain sets the sap aflowing; heaven's sunshine tempts the tender shoot above the ground; and by-and-by a noble tree stands there, tossing its arms in defiance of the tempest through a thousand winters. And the roots of all true life and character are planted as deep as this, and nourished in ways as subtle and unknown. Long before men are alive to His presence with them in their life, long before they have learned to resist temptation and to cultivate

[1] E. B. Speirs, *A Present Advent*, 285.

the love of His will, long before they know to choose the good and refuse the evil, God has begun His wonderful ministry to their souls. Already His good Spirit is putting the seed of a true manhood in them, and straightway it springeth and groweth up, a man knoweth not how. So in the opening of their days He may bless His children while they reck not of it—giving to them, so to say, in sleep.[1]

2. The same gracious ministry accompanies us *in our pursuit of happiness.* If anywhere in life, it is just there that it is vain to rise up early and to sit up late. Not when we are determined, come what may, to have a pleasant and a happy life; not then, as the reward of that insistence, does God bestow the music of the heart. He gives us when there is forgetfulness of self, and the struggle to be true to what is highest, though the morning break without a glimpse of blue, and the path be through the valley of the shadow. The one sure way to miss the gift of happiness is to rise early and to sit up late for it. To be bent at every cost on a good time is the sure harbinger of dreary days. It is when we have the courage to forget all that, and to lift up our hearts to do the will of God, that, like a swallow flashing from the eaves, happiness glances out with glad surprise.

¶ In spite of his depressed condition, John Stuart Mill was able to do his usual work at the India Office. But it was done mechanically. He felt no interest in it. Melancholy ruled him. He began to ask whether life was worth living on such terms. "I generally answered to myself," he says, "that I did not think I could possibly bear it beyond a year." At length relief came to him. It came in a curious way. He was reading some biography, in which the pathos of an incident in the story so overcame him that he gave way to tears. The discovery that emotion was still within him, and that he had the power to feel for others, was salvation to him. "From this moment my burden grew lighter. The oppression of the thought that all feeling was dead within me was gone. I was no longer hopeless. I was not a stock or a stone. I had still, it seemed, some of the material out of which all worth of character, and all capacity for happiness, are made." His old interests now revived. The cloud which had so darkened his life withdrew, and existence became to him once again pleasant and useful. He still believed that "happiness is the test of all rules of conduct," but he had learned that "this

[1] A. Martin, *Winning the Soul*, 69.

end was to be attained only by not making it the direct end. Those only are happy who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness; on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind, even on some art or pursuit, followed not as a means, but as itself an ideal end. Aiming thus at something else, they find happiness by the way."[1]

3. *All through our life* God's secret ministry is at work, and we owe much to it when we are called to lift the burden off our shoulders and rest a little. Less or more these grateful interruptions of our toil occur in the lives of all men, and, living at the pressure most of us do, they are as necessary as they are welcome. And it would be a pity if any one failed to reap from such a season the full benefit it was meant to bring him. Leisure is a good gift, and to be used wisely; and for leisure also we shall give account. Therefore let a man use it even earnestly if he will. Let him take advantage of it to pass his life's affairs heedfully in review. Let him ask how things stand with him in God's sight. Let him examine carefully his works and ways, and mend his plans for the future. But let him not forget the wisdom of "a wise passiveness." Besides this conscious rearrangement of the life with all its interests and duties there is another benefit conceivable. Simply to have escaped from the crush and din of the life we have been living, and to breathe a freer, calmer atmosphere—this alone may mean much for us. While the mind lies fallow it may gather to itself fresh life and power. The finest invigoration of the soul's whole faculties may come to it in the profoundest rest. For God blesses His beloved while they sleep.

¶ The sect called the Quietists, who flourished in the seventeenth century, and who taught that God came closest to the soul when it simply waited for Him, and did not actively search for Him, may have too exclusively chosen the Psalmist's line for their motto, and its spirit as their guide in the religious life. But there is a sense in which we must all be Quietists, and rest from thinking and working that God may come to us in our dreams. To cherish such a belief, to feel that everything does not depend on us, far from being a hindrance to work, a temptation to spiritual idleness, is just the one thing which can enable us to do our work efficiently, because it enables us to do it without worry and over-anxiety.[2]

[1] H. Lewis, *Modern Rationalism*, 103. [2] E. B. Speirs, *A Present Advent*, 290.

¶ God gives to many of us in our waking state, but not to the highest, not to the best beloved. Talent is got by waking, but not genius. Genius is like the nightingale—unconscious of the beauty of its own song. Even so is there a genius of the spirit. There are souls that win their virtue in the school of stern experience; God gives to them in waking. But there are others, like the garden of Eden, who need not a man to till the ground. They yield their fruit spontaneously. They are beautiful, not because they ought, but because they must. They can no more help being kind than the bee can help making its hive. They are not under the law, but under grace, and so they do everything, not legally, but gracefully. The flowers of their hearts are wild flowers; God alone has tended them; they have bloomed in the light of His smile; they have called no man master. These are they to whom the Father giveth in sleep.[1]

## III.

### Giving by Sleep.

1. A Godlike boon it is that frees us from our drudgery, heals our weariness, lifts our anxiety, and blinds us to the morrow. It is a blessed thing to be thus saved, even for a little while, from ourselves. But the night draws to dawn, and the gift of sleep is spent, and the old life claims the man anew. Now is it that he finds the gifts which God brings by sleep. He faces life with these in hand, and faces it therefore with new courage and vigour. His body has been strengthened, his mind cleared, his heart nerved, his will re-strung.

Wonderful is the work of repair in life that goes on while we sleep. Men bring the great ships to dock after they have ploughed the waves or battled with the storms and are battered and strained and damaged, and there they are repaired and made ready to go to sea again. At night our jaded and exhausted bodies are dry-docked after the day's conflict and toils, and while we sleep the mysterious process of restoration and reinvigoration goes on; and when morning comes we are ready to begin a new day of toil and care. We lie down tired, feeling sometimes that we can never do another day's work; but the morning comes

[1] G. Matheson, *Searchings in the Silence*, 101.

again, and we rise renewed in body and spirit, full of enthusiasm, and strong and brave for the hardest duties.

¶ The author of *The Mystery of Sleep*, Dr. John Bigelow, is not satisfied with the ordinary answer, that we sleep in order that we may rest and repair the waste tissues. He does not believe that that is a satisfactory answer to the question as to why we are compelled to sleep one hour out of three, eight hours out of every twenty-four, four months out of every year, and twenty-three years out of every threescore years and ten. He seriously assails this position by asserting that we do not rest when we sleep in any sense in which we do not rest when awake. He pertinently asks: "What faculty of the spiritual or the physical nature of man is in repose during sleep? What single function or energy of the body is then absolutely suspended? Certainly not our hearts, which do not enjoy a moment's rest from the hour of our birth to our decease. The heart is always engaged in the effort to send our blood, latent with vital energy, through every vein, artery, and tissue of our bodies." And so he goes on, taking up various organs of the human frame, and shows that nothing rests while we sleep.

He goes on to say that the great purpose of sleep is to dissociate us periodically from the world in which we live, and in a sense to regenerate us morally and spiritually. To his mind, we have in sleep conditions which are in harmony with one of the supreme behests of a Christian life—utter deliverance from the domination of the phenomenal world; entire emancipation, for these few sleeping hours, from the cares and ambitions of the life into which we were born, and to the indulgence of which we are inclined by nature to surrender the service of all our vital energies. If it be a good thing to live above the world, to regard our earthly life as transitory, as designed to educate us for a more elevated existence, to serve us as a means, not an end, then we have in sleep, apparently, an ally and coadjutor—at least, to the extent of delivering us for several hours every day from a servile dependence upon what ought to be a good slave, but is always a bad master.[1]

2. Gifts of spiritual illumination and direction have come through sleep. When God shuts the doors of sense, He keeps open His own way into the spirit; and many a time He gives His beloved thoughts of truth and desires for good that surprise the sleeper when he gets himself back again. He awakes to earth as

[1] L. A. Banks, *The Great Promises of the Bible*, 88.

one come from heaven, with the life of heaven still pulsing in his heart. How plain his duty is! how sure his help! how bright his hope! Abraham fell into a deep sleep, and in it God gave him a vision of what we often desire, that of the future; he told him that four hundred years hence the people of Israel would come out of Egypt and march in triumph to the Promised Land. Jacob, when he ran away from home, lay down to sleep, putting a stone beneath his head for a pillow, and as he lay there he dreamed of heaven. A ladder of light came down from the Throne of God, and on it angels ascending and descending; what a delightful experience in sleep, a vision of Heaven, a sight of Home. But there is still more in the vision; the ladder is a beautiful type of Jesus Christ. He has been let down from God's Throne, so that men may reach the feet of their Father in Heaven.

¶ There is an advice of my old mother's which I have often acted upon, and I pass it on to you: "Before doing an action which may mean, by-and-by, a great crisis, sleep on it for a night or two. Do not act at once, or you may be foolish. After a good sleep, at least a man's nerves are steady and his brain and mind are well-balanced." God gives these to men in their sleep.[1]

The hours of day are like the waves
  That fret against the shores of sin:
    They touch the human everywhere,
    The bright-divine fades in their glare,
And God's sweet voice the spirit craves
    Is heard too faintly in the din.

When all the senses are awake,
  The mortal presses overmuch
    Upon the great immortal part,
    And God seems farther from the heart.
Must souls, like skies when day-dawns break,
    Lose star by star at sunlight's touch?

But when the sun kneels in the west
  And gradually sinks as great hearts sink,
    And in his sinking flings adown
    Bright blessings from his fading crown,
The stars begin their song of rest
    And shadows make the thoughtless think.

[1] W. K. Bryce, *Appeals to the Soul*, 68.

The human seems to fade away,
And down the starred and shadowed skies
The heavenly comes, as memories come
Of home to hearts afar from home,
And through the darkness after day
Many a winged angel flies.

And somehow, tho' the eyes see less,
Our spirits seem to see the more;
When we look thro' night's shadow-bars,
The soul sees more than shining stars—
Yea, sees the very loveliness
That rests upon the golden shore.[1]

3. By a last sleep God leads His beloved to a perfect life and an endless day. Death is the sinking of the wearied man into the lap of Nature that she may soothe and refresh him. It is the draught that relaxes the strained energies, and smoothes the brow of care, and cools the fever of the heart; and from its gentle sway the man emerges with his powers refitted and rebraced for the toil and endeavours of his life. And what is Death but this? It is a sleep, no more; a sleep in which earth's weariness is drowned for ever and care and sorrow sink into perpetual oblivion and the whole nature is finally recruited and refreshed for unending service elsewhere.

¶ After forty years of indefatigable toil, Huxley retired to his home at Eastbourne on the cliffs of England's southern coasts, still to breast the storms and enjoy the love and confidence of friends and foes, who, however much they agreed with or differed from him, gave him their united and hearty esteem. He died on June 29, 1895. His gravestone bears these significant and touching lines written by his wife:

Be not afraid, ye waiting hearts that weep:
For still He giveth His belovëd sleep:
And if an endless sleep He wills,
So best.

This is beautiful resignation; but we believe that He who giveth His belovëd sleep will assign to him eternal rest from earthly misgiving and fear, and also an appropriate sphere of future activity. Surely an existence so nobly filled with higher

[1] Father Ryan.

forms of human effort cannot be doomed to the extinction of endless sleep![1]

Out yonder in the moonlight, wherein God's Acre lies,
Go angels walking to and fro, singing their lullabies.
Their radiant wings are folded, and their eyes are bended low,
As they sing among the beds whereon the flowers delight to grow—

"Sleep, oh, sleep!
The Shepherd guardeth His sheep.
Fast speedeth the night away,
Soon cometh the glorious day;
Sleep, weary ones, while ye may,—
Sleep, oh, sleep!"

The flowers within God's Acre see that fair and wondrous sight,
And hear the angels singing to the sleepers through the night;
And, lo! throughout the hours of day those gentle flowers prolong
The music of the angels in that tender slumber-song,—

"Sleep, oh, sleep!
The Shepherd loveth His sheep.
He that guardeth His flock the best
Hath folded them to His loving breast;
So sleep ye now, and take your rest,—
Sleep, oh, sleep!"

From angel and from flower the years have learned that soothing song,
And with its heavenly music speed the days and nights along;
So through all time, whose flight the Shepherd's vigils glorify,
God's Acre slumbereth in the grace of that sweet lullaby,—

"Sleep, oh, sleep!
The Shepherd loveth His sheep.
Fast speedeth the night away,
Soon cometh the glorious day;
Sleep, weary ones, while ye may,—
Sleep, oh, sleep!"[2]

[1] S. P. Cadman, *Charles Darwin, and Other English Thinkers*, 86.
[2] Eugene Field, *Second Book of Verse*, 25.

# De Profundis.

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## De Profundis.

**Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.—Ps. cxxx. 1.**

1. This psalm belongs to the group of fifteen psalms called Psalms of Ascents or Goings up. It is a Psalter within the Psalter, and may possibly have originally formed a separate hymn-book. When these fifteen psalms—cxx.–cxxxiv. inclusive—were written we know not; but they have about them the breath of the exile in a foreign land, who from the long levels of his alien home saw far off in fancy the hills of his beloved fatherland; or nearer, in his going up from his captivity, beheld once more the snow-capped heights of Hermon to the north, or the grey, stony hills stand round about Jerusalem, as the mercy of God stood round about His people. Those who in imagination go back to the time when the singers took their harps from the willow-trees by Euphrates' side, and tuned them to these tender hymns, may hear as they read them how in some far warrior chieftain's tent, "upon the frosty Caucasus," the exile who has long time "dwelt among those that are enemies unto peace," chants sadly enough, "Woe is me, that I am constrained to dwell in Meshech and have my habitation among the tents of Kedar"; or may catch the cry of hope and triumph of the fugitive band, as they see the sun rise over the purple hills that bound the parched deserts or the moonlight wastes they have left behind.

¶ This was one of the favourite psalms of Luther—one he paraphrased and had set to music; in it, he said he saw the gate of heaven opening wide to him. His paraphrase of it became one of the favourite hymns of the German Reformers. And the song returned into Luther's own heart. During the Augsburg Diet, when he was at the Castle of Coburg, and had to suffer much from inward and outward trials, he fell into a swoon. On awaking from it, he said, "Come and let us, in defiance of the devil, sing the Psalm, 'Lord, from the depths to thee I cry.' Let us sing it in full chorus and extol and praise God." Being asked

on one occasion which were the best Psalms, he replied, "The Pauline Psalms" (Psalmi Paulini), and being pressed to say which they were, he answered: "The 32nd, the 51st, the 130th, and the 143rd. For they teach us that the forgiveness of sins is vouchsafed to them that believe without the law and without works; therefore are they Pauline Psalms; and when David sings, 'With thee is forgiveness, that thou mayest be feared,' so Paul likewise saith, 'God hath concluded all under sin that he may have mercy on all.' Therefore none can boast of his own righteousness, but the words, 'That thou mayest be feared,' thrust away all self-merit, teach us to take off our hat before God and confess, *gratia est, non meritum, remissio non satisfactio*—'it is all forgiveness, and no merit.'"

## I.

### In the Depths.

1. Our human nature and human life have their depths, and not in anything are they less understood than in the depths which belong to them. Their superficial aspects are for ever hiding from us their deeper realities. What calls itself knowledge of men—acquaintance with their ordinary thoughts, passions, motives, and ways, with their various humours, caprices, follies, and weaknesses—is not knowledge of man, of the inner and real man which the outer man as often conceals as reveals.

We speak at times of "a shallow man." But is there any such man anywhere? There are only too many men everywhere who are living on the surface of their nature, keenly alive to their earth-born wants and to the capacities of human existence for work and pleasure, men whose days are largely the record of mean ambitions and strivings. But to judge by appearances is nearly always misleading. The acutest judges of character are often at fault, and none go more frequently and lamentably astray in their reckoning than those who boast most confidently of their knowledge of men. In the so-called shallow man we may perceive, if we look intently and sympathetically enough, what is not shallow, and find, especially in those revealing hours when the tragic forces of existence sweep into his life, some suggestion of the latent power which needs the fiery storm to throw it up to the surface.

We are often only passing judgment upon ourselves, upon our want of thought, imagination, and insight, when we proclaim our fellows to be lacking in those elements to which the great and deep things of life make their appeal. In the circle in which we live and move there would be many rich discoveries for any one with fine imaginative power, skilled to see into

> The depths of human souls—
> Souls that appear to have no depth at all
> To careless eyes.

¶ There is a well-known poem by Matthew Arnold entitled "The Buried Life"—a poem full of haunting music and rare introspective power. It is a picture of many a soul, and it is not difficult to fill in from experience the outline which it supplies. We all have the power of living so completely upon the surface of our souls as to be ignorant of what is hidden in their depths. It is, indeed, a large part of the pathos and tragedy of life that we are so disobedient to the oracle which bids us know ourselves. We either do not care for self-knowledge, or imagine we have it in such abundance that we can swear by it at times—"as well as I know myself!" But there are moments when we have glimpses of what we are and may be, of hitherto unknown capacities and powers, and from beneath our conscious life there rise the murmuring voices of a deeper—a buried life.

> Yet still, from time to time, vague and forlorn,
> From the soul's subterranean depth upborne
> As from an infinitely distant land,
> Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey
> A melancholy into all our day.
> A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,
> And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again.
> The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain.[1]

2. Perhaps the Psalmist personifies the nation. The later days of Israel's history were days of storm and stress. The golden age of national prosperity had passed away. Storm after storm had swept over the nation. The great Powers of the East had arisen. They felt their strength, and the little exclusive Israelitish nation was their constant and ready prey. Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Egypt arose in their might. Part of the nation was dispersed and

[1] J. Hunter, *De Profundis Clamavi*, 3.

disappeared, and part of it was carried away. Those who returned after the Exile were but a poor and broken remnant, still under the dominion of their conquerors. We may hear in this pathetic psalm the voice of the nation crying to the Lord out of the deep waters of its distress. Its pride is humbled, its soul is brought low even to the dust by the wholesome discipline of adversity.

¶ We all remember those long, dark months at the beginning of the South African War, when we were appalled by the news of one reverse after another. There was the dread suspense, the anxious waiting. In many a home the interest was a personal one, and mothers and wives and children were in the depths of apprehension for loved ones far away. In that dark experience the nation betook itself to prayer and learnt to lift up its eyes to One above, and found in Him a very present help and stay in trouble.[1]

3. Whatever the original reference of the phrase "out of the depths," it comes to us with a larger meaning than the writer could apprehend. It is not an incident of life, it is life itself that constitutes for us the deep out of which we cry. We of this modern world have caught, as men never before have caught, a sense of the mystery of life. Men have lost, perhaps for ever, the art of unconscious objective living, the habit of looking upon life as a child looks upon its mother, gratefully accepting her gifts and asking no questions. We have well-nigh tortured all beauty and joy out of life by our fierce, relentless probings. In return we have captured here and there a fact, a force, a law, a glimpse of the methods by which life fulfils itself. Our sciences and philosophies have broadened our conceptions. To us life is a larger, richer thing than to our fathers. But, after all, our deepest questions are unanswered. There is no possibility of their answer. What is life? What is its purpose? Whence did it come? Whither does it go? Why am I here, living to-day a conscious, sentient, thinking drop in the mighty torrent of life that pours unceasingly from the exhaustless bosom of nature? I am borne on the flow of the torrent. Whence? Whither? Wherefore? These are questions a man asks when he disengages himself from the rush of the world and tries to find some meaning for his life. It may be an unhealthy business; but never were men so busy at

[1] R. B. Tweddell.

it as now. The difficulty is that life echoes back our questions unanswered. It refuses to explain itself. We are simply submerged in the stream which flows through nature, as the planets roll in their orbits, and the waves of light pulse through the ether. What remains? There remains the mystery which we call prayer, almost as great a mystery as life itself.

¶ God in His infinite mercy has placed us in those deeps of wonder at life and death, of why and whither, deeps of intense agony: "Wherefore hidest thou thy face?" "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself." Deeps of intense joy: "Thou art about my bed, and spiest out all my ways, there is not a thought in my heart but thou knowest it altogether"; and deeps of satisfaction and quiet inward peace, which Wordsworth spoke of when he said—

> Enough, if something from our hands have power
> To live, and act, and serve the future hour;
> And if, as toward the silent tomb we go,
> Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent dower,
> We feel that we are greater than we know.[1]

4. There is a deeper mystery still—the mystery of sin. The great religions of the world expressed in sacrifices and rituals of atonement, often grotesque and horrible, their sense of moral failure and guilt. The sense is rooted in the conscience, and it has deepened as the life of the conscience has deepened. It finds expression in the meditations of Marcus Aurelius. It sends out a long, agonizing cry from the pages of St. Paul. The religion whose elemental facts and implications he, more than any other man, threw into architectonic form, disclosed the subtlety and virulence of the taint which had fastened on human nature. In giving to men a new sense of God, it gave them a new sense of sin. All along its history, those who have climbed farthest up its spiritual heights, its saints and heroes, have glanced with the most shuddering fear down the spiritual chasms on whose verge they trod.

¶ The German naturalist, Büchner, in his book, *Man in the Past, the Present, and the Future*, writes these profound words: "It is only in man that the world becomes conscious to such a degree that it rises out of its previous dream-like natural existence.

[1] H. D. Rawnsley.

Struggle therefore rages on the domain of morals as violently as it formerly did on the physical field." And another German scholar, Frauenstadt, in his *Religion of Nature*, writes: "In the self-assertion of the flesh against the spirit I recognize sin; and since man is by nature subject to this tyranny of the flesh, it follows that he is by nature sinful; and the sinful nature propagating itself, there arises an original sinfulness."[1]

¶ The word sin implies the existence of something which ought not to be where it is; in using it, we set up an external standard and condemn what fails to conform to it. The most decisive argument against identifying sin with imperfection is the verdict of the human consciousness itself. The consciousness of sin as a positive malignant fact is most intense in the highest natures. It is the saint, not the sinner, who says, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It was the Son of God Himself who, as Christians believe, gave His life a ransom for sin, because no smaller price could destroy its power.[2]

## II.

### The Cry Out of the Depths.

1. The cry for God is the natural utterance of the awakened soul of man in every land and age—the cry of man whenever and wherever he freely speaks out of the depths of his nature, an aspiration which all history confesses. It may not always be an intelligent or conscious cry, but a seeker after God man has always been and must ever be, because from God he comes, begotten, not made, and with a nature so constituted that only in God can he find his full and final satisfaction and rest. The surface of his life may often appear to say one thing, and its depths quite another thing, but it is the cry from the depths that reveals what he truly is and what he most needs. It is his inmost wants and desires, not his hard, cold sense and keen understanding, that read most rightly the secret of his life. It is not his real spiritual needs that belong to the surface of his life, but only those poor selfish cravings which are often mistaken for them by ill-instructed minds. Outwardly he may seem to long and cry for other things more than for the presence of God, and to find his

[1] W. W. Battershall. [2] W. R. Inge, *Truth and Falsehood in Religion.*

peace and joy in them; but when his soul is moved and searched, and the fountains of the great deep are broken up, in all those crises which throw light on the inner condition and movement of his being, the cry for God is seen to be fundamental, and his longing to connect his life in some way with the life of the invisible and eternal world is felt to be an irrepressible longing, which tends ever to rise into a strong and intense passion.

¶ It was once said by a celebrated English lawyer of our time that the man who could not get on without religion, who could not occupy his mind with love, friendship, business, politics, science, art, literature, and travel, must be a poor kind of creature. It is, on the contrary, the man who can be wholly satisfied with outward and earthly things apart from God who is the poor kind of creature living upon the surface of his nature, with the energies of his spirit still dormant, or so suppressed and overborne that they are in danger of dying out. To be truly a man is to have infinite capacity for God, to have desires, affections, and needs which the things of civilization and culture cannot satisfy, which can be satisfied only in communion with the Divine. Man, be he what he may, is made to be a seeker after God; and, because he cannot escape from himself, he cannot escape from God.[1]

¶ The one thought which possesses me most at this time and, I may say, has always possessed me, is that we have been dosing our people with religion when what they want is not this but the Living God, and that we are threatened now, not with the loss of religious feeling, so-called, or of religious notions, or of religious observances, but with Atheism. Everywhere I seem to perceive this peril. The battle within, the battle without, is against this; the heart and the flesh of our countrymen is crying out for God. We give them a stone for bread, systems for realities; they despair of ever attaining what they need. The upper classes become, as may happen, sleekly devout for the sake of good order, avowedly believing that one must make the best of the world without God; the middle classes try what may be done, by keeping themselves warm in dissent and agitation, to kill the sense of hollowness; the poor, who must have realities of some kind, and understanding from their betters that all but houses and lands are abstractions, must make a grasp at them or else destroy them. And the specific for all this evil is some evangelical discourse upon the Bible being the rule of faith, some High Church cry for

[1] J. Hunter, *De Profundis Clamavi*, 15.

tradition, some liberal theory of education. Surely we want to preach it in the ears of all men. It is not any of these things or all these things together you want, or that those want who speak of them. All are pointing towards a Living Being, to know whom is life, and all, so far as they are set up for any purpose but leading us into that knowledge, and so to fellowship with each other, are dead things which cannot profit.[1]

2. No one can call from the depths until he has gone down into the depths; and no one can reasonably expect God to be "attentive unto the voice of his supplication" until he cry "out of the depths." There is much outward prayer in the present day. Services, and means of grace, and administrations of the Sacraments are multiplied, and many wonder that there is not a corresponding visible result in life and morals. Is it not possible that the failure may arise from the *conditions* of successful prayer not being fulfilled? May not the charge against Israel be partly true against ourselves—This people honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me? They have fasted to the letter and not to the spirit. The "cry," the worship, the prayer, may not have come from the "depths" of conscious spiritual need, and so it has not reached the everlasting hills; it has not risen to the throne of the Lord's Presence; it has not awakened and could not awaken a response. How can we expect the great and holy God to be "attentive" when we are scarcely attentive ourselves, when our utterances are merely formal, dictated by no feeling of penitence or awe? To approach God acceptably, to speak to Him aright, the cry must come "out of the depths" of the soul, and to do this a man must go down into those depths.

The Psalmist went down into the depths of shame on account of his sin, and his cry is therefore the sharp cry of penitence. This is plain from his words; for he adds, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." His conscience had been awakened. He had realized the enormity of sin. His accuser had stood before him, charging him with faults enough to condemn him for ever. He had seen that he was full of sin, burdened with guilt, in imminent danger of punishment. He sank into the depths, overwhelmed by fear, beholding the justice

[1] *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, i. 369.

of God and His power to inflict penalty, swallowed up in despair and the consciousness of guilt.

¶ The Cross of Calvary which tells of the awfulness of sin speaks also of the mercy of a sin-forgiving God. The soul looks to the completed sacrifice of propitiation and thence to the risen, living Saviour, who continues to make intercession for us. Well has the poet Fenner expressed the experience—

Up from the deeps, O God, I cry to Thee,
Hear my soul's prayer, hear Thou her litany,
O Thou who sayest, "Come, wanderer, home to Me."

Up from the deeps of sorrow, wherein lie
Dark secrets veiled from earth's unpitying eye,
My prayers, like star-crowned angels, Godward fly.

Not from life's *shallows* where the waters sleep,
A dull, low marsh where stagnant waters sleep,
But ocean-voiced, deep calling unto deep.

3. In the lowest depths the cry of the soul becomes most importunate. Down in the depths the suffering soul instinctively reaches out its hands even though manacled by doubt—instinctively raises its voice, even though bitter with rebellion—for God, for nothing less than God, for God as the only One sufficient for the awful needs of the lonely failing heart. Such depths are places of revelation. They show what even the common superficial life needs, though it may not be aware of it. They bid us know our real Helper, that when we rise again to the common level we may not forget the supreme lesson taught us by this glimpse, through tears, into the tremendous realities of life.

¶ "Perhaps to suffer," wrote the Swiss theologian, Vinet, in one of his letters, "is nothing else than to live deeply. Love and sorrow are the conditions of a profound life." A truer word was never spoken. The tragedy in which we live is meant to educate us. There would indeed be no understanding of life at all did we not know from experience that in life's depths we receive our best teaching and training. Out of the depths have come the finest poetry, the finest music, the finest speech of the world. "The Bible owes its place in literature," said Emerson, "not to miracles, but to the fact that it comes from a profounder depth of life than any other book." Out of the depths have come the most inspired and inspiring of the psalms of faith, both ancient

and modern. Out of the depths men have brought blessings which are rarely found in green pastures and by still waters. We never know how much God is the one great need of the soul till we go down to the depths.[1]

## III.

### The Hearer of Prayer.

The Psalmist's cry is addressed to the Lord, and we notice that the word "Lord" is printed in capital letters; and whenever the word Lord is in capitals it stands for Jehovah. This was the highest name of God. It was considered so sacred by the Jew that he never pronounced it. When he read the Scriptures he substituted another name—Adonai—which was of a less sacred character. This name appears in the second and third verses of the psalm. Indeed we cannot be quite certain as to the right pronunciation of this incommunicable name of the God of Israel.

1. Does this God hear? Is there a Divine response to man's cry from the depths? There must be in the nature of things, we are persuaded, such a response, something outside of man answering to his inner life and fulfilling its needs, actual movement and manifestation on the part of God corresponding to our natural cravings after Him. Out of the depths man cries, down to the depths God must come, meeting with a corresponding answer every real want of the souls He has made to seek after Him, if haply they may feel after Him and find Him. Whatever may be the relations between human aspiration and Divine condescension, whatever may be the conditions of the coming down of the heavenly help to human need, it is simply impossible for any religious soul to think that there is no approach of God to man. Unless life is a tremendous unreality and illusion, and we come into the world only to be fooled and cheated; unless the universe departs from its order in dealing with the spiritual necessities of mankind and the cry for God meets with exceptional treatment, quite unlike that given to the other functions and attitudes of our nature, it is simply inconceivable that the fundamental cravings

[1] J. Hunter, *De Profundis Clamavi*, 22.

of the soul can exist without their satisfaction and the prayer from the depths remain unanswered.

¶ The objection that prayer involves the dictation of man to God; that prayer, where it is answered, means the control of things by man's uninformed wishes, rather than by infinite wisdom, or by the reign of law, falls at once to the ground when we consider what true prayer really is. It is a travesty of the idea to suppose it means saying to God, "Do this, or that"; "Give me what I want." For the genuine prayer comes in the first instance not from man, but from God Himself. It is the gracious circulation of Divine ideas through the human soul. It is the rain from heaven, falling upon this prepared soil, and springing up there in love, and trust, and holy resignation to a Will higher than itself. It is, as Goethe has somewhere put it, God seeking for Himself and meeting Himself in man. Prayer at its truest is not man having his way with God, but God having His way with man.[1]

2. God answers man's cry for forgiveness, for reconciliation and union with Him. The great obstacle to religion in our world is not ignorance, but sin. More than enlightenment, we need salvation. Can all our civilization minister to a troubled conscience? Can all our culture heal a guilty pang? Can the knowledge of any scientific, philosophical, or theological truth subdue an evil passion? But in the depths of our weakness and sin God is our salvation. The deliverance of man is dear to God. It is the essential nature of love to seek and to save. Because God is love, He is ever coming down to the depths of our life, depths of sorrow and sin, the deepest depths of degradation, in order to help and to bring to Himself by all the power of His love His wayward and disobedient children. Whether it be a fallen or a rising world we live in, we know in our hearts that we need reconciliation with the God of the world. Blessed be His eternal love! He has never been outside His world, but has been always in it, bearing the sins and carrying the sorrows of our race. Its history is the history of redemption, the history of the unceasing efforts of Him with whom we have to do, to influence without compelling the vagrant and stubborn wills of men.

¶ We must hold on fast to the fact that God's forgiveness is a very real thing, and not a mere dramatic thing; and that if we

[1] J. Brierley, *Religion and To-Day*, 64.

have to suffer what seems a disproportionate penalty for our fault, it is not sent us because God is merely an inflexible exactor of debts, but because by exacting them He gives us something that we could in no other way attain to. Where we go wrong is in comparing God to a human disciplinarian. If a father says to a son, "I forgive you, but I am going to punish you just the same," we may frankly conclude that he does not know what forgiveness means. The fact that he punishes merely means that he does not really trust the son's repentance, but is going to make sure that the son's repentance is not merely a plea for remission. We have to act so, or we believe that we have to act so, on occasions, to other human beings; but it is only because we cannot really read their hearts. If we knew that a repentance was complete and sincere, we should not need to exact any punishment at all. But with God there can be no such concealments. If a man repents of a sin and puts it away from him, and if none of the dreaded consequences do befall him, he may be grateful indeed for a gracious forgiveness. But if the consequences do fall on him, he may inquire whether his repentance had indeed been sincere, or only a mere dread of contingencies; while if he is penalized, however hardly, he may believe that his sufferings will bring him a blessing, and that by no other road can he reach peace.[1]

[1] A. C. Benson *Along the Road*, 244.

# Unity.

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## UNITY.

**Behold, how good and pleasant it is**
**For brethren to dwell together in unity.—Ps. cxxxiii. 1.**

1. HERDER says of this exquisite little song that "it has the fragrance of a lovely rose." Nowhere has the nature of true unity—that unity which binds men together, not by artificial restraints, but as brethren of one heart—been more faithfully described, nowhere so gracefully illustrated, as in this short ode. True concord, we are here taught, is a holy thing, a sacred oil, a rich perfume, which, flowing down from the head to the beard, from the beard to the garment, sanctifies the whole body. It is a sweet morning dew, which falls not only on the lofty mountain-peaks but on the lesser hills, embracing all and refreshing all with its influence.

2. The preservation of this unity was the object of the selection of one place to which the tribes should go up on pilgrimage three times a year. And the intercommunion with each other which the pilgrimages fostered was certainly one of the chief means by which the unity of feeling and sentiment was kept up among the scattered members of the nation century after century. The pilgrimages were to the Israelites what the meetings at the Olympic and other games were to the Greeks—at once witnesses to a belief in ethnic unity and a strong and efficient bond of union. This psalm was therefore admirably fitted for a "pilgrim song," which it is allowed on all hands to have been, and it must have greatly helped the various classes of pilgrims—the spiritual and secular authorities, the rich, the poor, the citizen, the peasant, and the widely divided members of the great Diaspora—to feel themselves united with each other and with Jehovah.

## I.

### The Secret of Unity.

There are innumerable ways in which we are bound together in life. There are ties of relationship or of friendship, nearer or more distant, of class and occupation, of common tastes, of personal likings, of religious feeling, of natural affection. There is that higher tie by which men are united in the endeavour to become better and to live above the world. There is still a higher union which, in our imperfect state, may be thought visionary or impossible, when the wills of men meet in God, and they know no other law or rule of life than His will. Yet there have been those in whom such a unity of the human and the Divine has really existed—it might exist in any of us. All these unities have in them elements of diversity arising out of circumstances or character or education. And to preserve the "one in many" (as the ancient philosopher would have said) is the first duty of any society, of mankind, of a family, a school, a college, a church, a nation.

1. A common life binds together the members of a family. A common life is the basis of the unity of a nation. Yet these can but illustrate the far more complete and searching unity of those, who, having *the* common life—the sublime, spiritual, eternal life in Christ—come together into the fellowship of the Christian Church. They are one in bonds that are eternal; one by no mere accident of natural birth, or social place; one in ways that cannot pass with the changing fashions of the world. They are one as being born again of the Spirit; as being created anew in Christ Jesus; as being quickened from the death of trespasses and sins; as being bought, not with corruptible things as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. Their common life in Christ breathes one common atmosphere, and feeds on one common food, and finds expression in one common want. They breathe in the smile of Christ's acceptance, and the knowledge of Christ's will. They feed on Christ's provision of grace. They want, above all things, Christ's honour. So they are one in the unity of their common life.

¶ We can form mechanical unions. We can bind wood and iron and gold and silver together. Each object that enters the combination retains all the qualities peculiar to it. There is union is such combinations but not unity. Gold is the same in all parts of the universe. It is the same in all ages and in all worlds. The same is true of all Christians. They are begotten of God; they are possessed of His nature; they are one in mind and in heart. They are one in spite of the flight of time. Christians of the first century and of the last and of all intervening centuries form one community. They are one in spite of space. Christians in all parts of the world, those that speak different tongues and have different manners and customs, are one flock, even as they are all tended by one Shepherd. They are one in spite of all differences, physical, mental, social, and spiritual. They are children of one Father, and they constitute the one household of the faith.[1]

2. There is unity in diversity. You cast your eye over a landscape, and your heart rejoices in the harmony unfolded from the scene before you, yet there is everywhere a difference in manifestation. In the beauty and grace of the forms which you see, in the spirit which insensibly reveals itself to you from wood and stream, lake, meadow, and mountain-side, you feel the sense of oneness. One Mind has evidently planned all this. One Hand, through whatever channels of physical force, has manifestly moulded all this. Yet, when group by group and item by item, you turn your eye and thought upon the objects of this landscape, you note how wide the difference is between the one and the other. May it not be thus also with the Church of the living God? May not the blessing of Divine grace rest, and the sweetness of brotherly unity abide, equally upon the hills of God's universal Zion, whether they tower from the north in the peaks of Hermon or roll away southward to the mountains round about Jerusalem?

¶ As no two blades of grass are exactly alike, so no two minds are capable of looking at any truth in precisely the same light. Queen Elizabeth could not get her ministers to agree among themselves as to a certain policy. She took half a dozen watches and started them all at the same time. After a while some lagged behind, others shot forward; no two kept together.

[1] A. M'Lean, *Where the Book Speaks*, 231.

"Ah!" said she, "I may well give up trying to make my ministers agree, when I cannot get half a dozen watches to keep time together." But nature has unity in the most varied diversity. No two atoms in the countless number that make up our globe are exactly alike, yet they make up an entire world. No two drops in the sea are probably alike in weight and form, yet they all unite to make up one sea. No two sands are identical, still they all unite to make up one shore. Behold here is unity in diversity. Taking a broad view—

The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord:
She is His new creation
By water and the word.

The foundation is one; the stones built on the foundation are as varied as can possibly be; but they all unite to make one building. Much, then, as we may vary in things non-essential, is there not a common basis on which all Christians can unite on things essential?[1]

3. Unity does not obliterate individuality but gives room for its free development. A living organism, such as the body of man or any other animal, is not merely a unity of parts, each of which fulfils a function necessary to the rest, so that the brain, heart, lungs, the various members and organs, have absolutely no separate or separable existence or life, so that each lives in and by the rest, their life its life, its life not its own but theirs; but, more than that, it is a unity which, unlike that of the machine, the parts themselves *feel*, so that each suffers in the injury or suffering, is happy with the happiness and well-being, of the rest. The closer and more integral oneness is not attained at the cost, but rather by the more intense development, of individual distinctiveness. Each member and organ is itself, attains to the richest development of its individual nature, gains itself, so to speak, only where it surrenders itself, its whole being and activity, to the unity in which it is comprehended. If it begins to act for itself, to seclude itself, to display any independent phenomena, any slightest movement that is not conditioned by the organism to which it belongs, the isolation is fatal. And if it is entirely separated from the rest, if it ceases to be permeated by a life

[1] O. F. S. P. Jenkins.

that is other than its own, the severed limb or dissected organ loses its whole reality and worth, and becomes mere dead matter.

¶ In the last year of his life, the Bishop wrote to Dr. Guinness Rogers, one of the best known of the leaders of English Nonconformity: "To me it is the most painful proof of our inadequate hold on the principles of Christianity that the profession of those principles should be a cause of disunion and bitter feeling. Attempts to remedy this fail because they conceive *unity* as something external and structural. When we look at the development of the world, we see increasingly varied opinions kept within useful limits by a general sense of the common welfare. I can conceive of a Christian commonwealth, consisting of bodies of believers each with opinions of their own about matters of organization, understanding one another, and respecting one another, yet conscious of a common purpose, which transcends all human methods. An Italian friend of mine quoted in a letter a saying of a Greek Bishop—that our systems were necessary protections against the storms of the world, but though the walls might be thick below, they all opened to the same heaven."[1]

## II.

### The Realization of Unity.

1. The Psalmist gives us two figures. Both are peculiar, and perhaps difficult for us to understand; but both are very expressive to the Eastern mind. They are the figures of the *oil* and the *dew*. Brotherly unity is like "the precious oil upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that came down upon the skirt of his garments." Brotherly unity is like "the dew of Hermon, that cometh down upon the mountains of Zion." Evidently in each of these figures the pervading, spreading, and beautifying influence of the sympathetic spirit is represented. God Himself pours on men the sacred anointing of His Divine Spirit and the dew of His quickening influences. When His servants are knit together, as they should be, they impart to one another the spiritual gifts received from above. When Christians are truly one as brethren, God's grace will fructify through each to all.

[1] *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton*, ii. 472.

(1) *Like the precious oil.*—Easterns perfumed themselves with fragrant oils, much as we do now with scented spirits; and the idea of the ointment spoken of would come home better to us if it were called "scent." The fragrant oil used to prepare the high priest for his solemn duties was made by special injunction from God, and the smell of it was strong and delightful. Poured on Aaron's head, it ran down his face and neck, touched the collar of his robe, and spread its fragrance to its very edge, and the whole place was filled and sanctified with the delightful Divine odours. So, pour down on any family, or Church, the sweet-smelling oil of unity, peacefulness, mutual bearing and forbearing, and brotherly love, and it will flow down over the whole body, adorning every member, and making every one a centre of fragrance and a fount of blessing.

The emblem is felicitous by reason of the preciousness, the fragrance and the manifold uses of oil; but these are to be taken into account only in a subordinate degree, if at all. The one point of comparison is the flow of the oil from the priestly head on to the beard and thence to the garments. It is doubtful whether ver. 2 refers to the oil or to the beard of the high priest. The latter reference is preferred by many, but the former is more accordant with the parallelism, and with the use of the word "flows down," which can scarcely be twice used in regard to oil and dew, the main subjects in the figures, and be taken in an entirely different reference in the intervening clause.

¶ Luther says, "In that He saith 'from the head,' He showeth the nature of true concord. For like as the ointment ran down from the head of Aaron, the high priest, upon his beard, and so descended unto the borders of his garments, even so true concord in doctrine and brotherly love floweth as a precious ointment, by the unity of the Spirit, from Christ, the High Priest and Head of the Church, unto all the members of the same. For by the beard and extreme parts of the garment He signifieth, that as far as the Church reacheth, so far spreadeth the unity which floweth from Christ her head."

(2) *Like the dew of Hermon.*—In this figure the same idea is preserved. The dew touches first the head, the high hill of Hermon, but it descends to the lesser hills of Zion, and spreads its refreshing influences over mountain-side and vale. Dew is the

emblem of Divine grace and blessing, so it may well be used as a figure for the special grace of brotherly unity. Wherever that gracious dew falls, the dry families, the dry churches of Zion, are surely nourished and refreshed.

¶ How can the dew of Hermon in the far north fall on the mountains of Zion? Some commentators, as Delitzsch, try to make out that "an abundant dew in Jerusalem might rightly be accounted for by the influence of the cold current of air sweeping down from the north over Hermon." But that is a violent supposition; and there is no need to demand meteorological accuracy from a poet. It is the one dew which falls on both mountains; and since Hermon towers high above the height of Zion, and is visited with singular abundance of the nightly blessing, it is no inadmissible poetic licence to say that the loftier hill transmits it to the lesser. Such community of blessing is the result of fraternal concord, whereby the high serve the lowly, and no man grudgingly keeps anything to himself, but all share in the good of each. Dew, like oil, is fitted for this symbolic use, by reason of qualities which, though they do not come prominently into view, need not be wholly excluded. It refreshes the thirsty ground and quickens vegetation; so fraternal concord, falling gently on men's spirits, and linking distant ones together by a mysterious chain of transmitted good, will help to revive failing strength and refresh parched places.[1]

2. The Spirit of unity needs to be cultivated. The unity of brotherly love will never become general, still less perfect, until we have all come to love God our Father supremely, with all our hearts, never until we see that the next great law which He wishes us to keep is to love one another as brethren, as all children of the same family as ourselves, until we see that only by loving one another can we possibly prove our love to Him. So that the more we love God the more we shall love one another, because that is the only way in which we can possibly please Him or be worthy of our high calling as His sons and daughters; moreover, this is the only way by which to know Him truly. And in the cultivation of sympathy with others we develop our own higher selves.

Personality has no existence except in and through fellowship. So we who believe that there is a vital distinction between persons

[1] A. Maclaren.

and things, and that persons are made in the image of God, and are redeemed by Him in order that they may be restored to His likeness, cannot acquiesce in any permanent separation from the innermost law of God's own life, which unveils to us—as far as we can discern it—personality perfected in and through fellowship. Each time that we proclaim our belief in the doctrine of the Trinity we bind ourselves afresh to try to learn the Divine secret which must be true, not only within the Godhead, but of all human personalities called into being by Him. It may well be that we are placed on earth on purpose to learn this lesson of communion and fellowship one with the other, with the laws which govern it, and with the hope for our race bound up in it.

¶ The recently published journals of Scott's Last Expedition supply precisely the illustration that we need. That expedition consisted of sixty-five members, thirty-two of whom were connected with the ship's crew and thirty-two formed that party, who, with him as leader, landed and lived together in that ice-bound region, five of them fighting their way over the 800 miles which separated them from the goal of their ambition. It is worth noting that this intrepid body were representative of many interests. If capitalists had contributed large sums of money for the privilege of taking part in it, no less had labour its representatives in those whose chief recommendation consisted in their capacity for hard work. Art, as well as science in several branches, was ably represented among them; some were of the learned professions, while others could be described as unlearned and ignorant men. Both the great services, the Navy and the Army, made characteristic contributions in the men of grit and character who represented them. Only those who have read the journals can realize the abundant excuses which might have been put forward had dissension and diversity of opinion broken out among them. But what do we read in Captain Scott's own words? —"Never could there have been a greater freedom from quarrels or troubles of all sorts. I have never heard a harsh word or seen a black look. It is glorious to realize that men can live together under conditions of hardship, monotony, and danger, in such bountiful good-comradeship and harmony." While on board, we read, "Not a word of complaint or of danger has been heard, and the inner life of our small community is very pleasant to think upon, and also very wonderful considering the small space in which we are confined." In the hut during the weary months from January to November, 1911, Captain Scott's many refer-

ences to their unity may be summed up in the following striking witness of it: "I am very much impressed with the extraordinary and genuine cordiality of the relations which exist among our people. I do not suppose that a statement of real truth—that is, there is no friction at all—will be believed. It is so generally thought that the many rubs of such a life as this are quietly and purposely sunk into oblivion. With me there is no need to draw a veil—there is nothing to cover up. There are no strained relations existing here and nothing is more emphatically evident than the universal amicable spirit that is shown on all occasions." Here, then, it will be granted that men found it a good thing for brethren to dwell together in unity; but the question arises how was it done? The answer may give us at least an indication of the remedy to meet our own need. It was their unbounded belief in their leader. Each and all found their unity in subordinating their will to his. They were not of the same mind, still less were they of the same opinion, but they were all "like-minded" in this respect, to quote the distinction which Bishop Creighton made in commenting on St. Peter's analysis, "Be ye all like-minded, sympathetic." Although there were moments when the Commander's decision caused terrible disappointment to individuals and groups of individuals, yet we read that they took it very well and behaved like men. Secondly, "enduring hardness" was common to them all, leader and followers alike. They found themselves bound together in an inhospitable region, bent on achieving a difficult enterprise, each needing help, each rendering it in turn. Under these conditions they learnt how to live in an atmosphere of constant self-sacrifice, and the division and disunion which so often arises from unconscious self-assertion, rooted in self-will, must have been, as it were, "frost-bitten" at its very beginning and allowed to perish. Even greater proof of their possession of the virtue of self-repression was given by the magnanimity with which they met their disappointment at discovering that rival explorers had outstripped them. There was no little-mindedness, though natural disappointment, at realizing that, while the victory had been won, yet the pre-eminence and priority of being first belonged to their competitors, not to themselves. This most difficult lesson of learning to rate the triumph of a cause higher than the triumph of personally achieving it was not the least of the hardships by which they were tried and tested and not found wanting. Again, they had, and realized that they had, the eyes of the nation upon them, and not of one nation only, but of the whole civilized world. The interest taken by the whole world in the news of the fate of the five heroic men

who laid down their lives for their cause proved the tension and suspense with which they were being watched. These men were, and felt themselves to be, trustees of the national honour and national traditions. It was therefore true instinct which led their leader not only to plant his country's flag at the South Pole, but also at the hour of his death to ask that a portion of that flag might be handed to his Sovereign, for he and his companions had earned the right to be regarded as representatives of the Empire.[1]

## III.

### The Blessings of Unity.

"For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." Does this mean for the individual simply a life that is to be endless? In the light of the whole Psalter one may answer "No." "For ever" in the Old Testament has a relative sense, which has in each particular case to be separately investigated. If it were simply endless life, we might be encouraged to think of God's blessing as continuous prosperity in outward circumstances. It is altogether better to have *that* kind of blessing from God changeable, because our circumstances cannot remain long the same, and the relation of circumstances to us, and the influence of circumstances on us, are constantly varying. If God were to imprison and fix one set of circumstances for ever, and give us to choose which we would have thus fixed, we should be hopelessly puzzled, and God would be doing us no kindness. People talk about "for ever" and "everlasting," without thinking to what alone those terms can be applied, if they are to represent any real blessing to us. The entire sphere of the sensual cannot be "for evermore." It is of its very nature that it begins and ends. The "fashion of this world passeth away." It is *life* that is for evermore. It is the spiritual being that man *is* that lives for ever. It is the spiritual character that man wins that abides for ever. And helping him to win that character is the blessing —the "life for evermore" which God bestows.

1. With Christian unity there comes *peace*. In the Psalmist's days brotherly unity brought peace. Benjamin ceased to "ravin

[1] Canon Bickersteth, in *The Guardian*, Jan. 30, 1914.

as a wolf," and Ephraim no longer "vexed Judah." The civil strife of the land ceased, and peace flowed like a river. It is so always when Christian unity gains its holy power. Strife fails. Brotherhood hangs up the needless sword and shield and spear. Brotherhood soon forgets all jealousies, and ceases to practise the arts of war. Brotherhood makes mutual injury impossible. Brothers bear one another's burdens. Brothers in Christ follow peace with all men, and holiness. Brothers have one great anxiety, that, if it be possible, they may see eye to eye, and be of one mind in the Lord. Unity ever brings with it peace.

¶ As a basis of Christian fellowship and fully acknowledged brotherhood, we hold that nothing more is necessary than evidence of unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. "*Unum corpus sumus IN CHRISTO.*" That is enough: "Christ is all and in all." But, so far, we seem to be getting farther and farther from a union that is manifest to the world. A great ecclesiastical organization is a visible thing; uniformity, though less impressive, is yet quite easily observed; even a creed is something that can be made visible after a fashion by the use of the press; but this "faith in Christ" withdraws the essential unity so entirely into the spiritual region that the world cannot be expected to follow it there and find it out, and be any the wiser or better for it. It remains, then, to show how this unity of faith in Christ can be made manifest to the world. And here it will be safe to go to the Apostle Paul. "Neither circumcision," he says, "nor uncircumcision, but faith"—so far so good, and what next? "Faith *working through love.*" Here we have the transition from the invisible to the visible. The faith which links each Christian to Christ is unseen by men, but the love which is the result of it, need not, cannot in fact, be concealed from them, if it is there in force. And every effort should be made to promote the love among Christians, and to induce them to avail themselves of all means within their reach, not only of cherishing it in their hearts, but also of expressing it in their lives. There has been progress in this direction too, very marked and happy progress, in recent years; but there needs to be a much larger development and fuller expression of this Christian affection before much impression can be made on an unbelieving world. It must, in fact, be so marked and remarkable as not only to compel attention, but to oblige those who observe it to ask the questions, How can it be? Whence has it come? No one can say that this point has yet been reached.[1]

[1] J. Monro Gibson, *Christianity According to Christ*, 102.

2. Unity brings *pleasantness.* "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is!" Unity puts graciousness and beauty upon a community or a church, so that men think it pleasant to look upon. Unity is a bloom upon the fruit, sunshine upon the landscape, polish upon the diamond, health upon the face, morning glow upon the flowers, tone in the voice, and deep clear blue in the vast sky. Unity tints a family, a church, an enterprise with pleasantness. How pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity!

¶ It is related of the Duke of Wellington, that once when he remained to take the sacrament at his parish church, a very poor old man went up the opposite aisle, and, reaching the communion table, knelt down close by the side of the duke. Some one (probably a pew opener) came and touched the poor man on the shoulder, and whispered to him to move farther away, or to rise and wait until the duke had received the bread and wine. But the eagle eye and quick ear of the great commander caught the meaning of that touch and that whisper. He clasped the old man's hand, and held him, to prevent his rising, and in a reverential undertone, but most distinctly, said, "Do not move; we are all equal here."[1]

3. Unity is the secret of *prosperity.* Divided, men ever fail, but united, they become more than conquerors. The strands of a rope will not hold a child from falling. Knit them together, twine them about each other, and they will hold the great ship to her moorings. United, God gives prosperity. "It shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel." God withholds His blessing until the cry that rises to Him is the united cry of land and sky and crops and men.

¶ During the siege of the legations in Peking national lines and religious lines were forgotten. In the presence of the infuriated Boxers all felt that they were one and that their salvation depended upon their standing together. Protestant and Catholic and Greek were one for the time. During the siege wherever the line was hard pressed there the defenders rallied, regardless of what nationality held the hard pressed point, because a failure at one point meant a failure at every point. One of the

[1] R. Tuck.

interesting incidents of the siege was connected with the international gun. This was an old English six-pounder. It was mounted on an Austrian carriage; it was loaded with German powder and Russian shells; it was fired by the trained hand and eye of an American gunner. Had it not been for the spirit of unity that prevailed in that most critical period all must have perished.[1]

4. Unity gives *power*. Our Lord evidently had a profound idea of the value and power of unity among His disciples. In His last prayer observe what He seemed most to desire for them: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." As soon as a church was gathered, the spirit of *concord* seemed to be a necessary feature, which appeared without being forced. "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." They all continued "daily with one accord in the temple," etc. Writing to the churches the Apostles evidently think that brotherly unity is of the utmost importance to the prosperity of those communities. They constantly urge its preservation. "Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment." "We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." "Let brotherly love continue." "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

¶ The dew-drop, we are told, has within it a latent thunderbolt, yet it melts away into the corolla of the wild flower, and does its gentle work of nurture so silently that no ear can mark it.

[1] A. McLean, *Where the Book Speaks*, 239.

There are many men, and yet more women, who sink mildly into the earth-currents of life like a dew-drop, who have latent thunder enough within them to shake society if it should once go forth in that wise. But would their power for good be thereby any greater? Is not that a false estimate of moral forces which measures them by the noise and stir, the flash and thunderous echoes, which result from their exercise? Are not gentleness and repose, after all, the mightiest powers? Let those who love and choose to have their words distil as the dew remember that in the silent, unobtrusive acts of daily life they may be treasuring up in other hearts forces which in their final outcome will give countless blessings to the world.[1]

¶ No mere coincidence of opinion or of practice in other directions can be compared in uniting power with devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ. Even now, amidst all our outward schisms, and all our inward alienations from each other, it makes our hearts burn within us to speak together of Christ. At such moments—of course I mean where the love of Christ is seen to be genuine and single-hearted—we feel impatient of those miserable barriers which have erected themselves between us to defeat or to delay His purposes. We are conscious of being really one, and feel that it is a shame that that unity should not be allowed to have its open and glad expression. What right have divergences of opinion or practice by which either party intends only the promotion of the cause of Christ to interrupt ecclesiastical unity between those who love each other for the love that both bear to Him? In the ancient days the love of Christ was confessed to be the internal principle of Christian unity. "Grace be with all them who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity": so St. Paul ends the great Epistle which displays the glories of the one holy Church. It is adoring love of Christ which is the true fundamental article of the Christian creed. It may co-exist with many mistakes, many superstitions, many blindnesses; and Christians may well be patient with these, while seeking to increase that central love which, in its natural and healthy action, will at last dispel them. "If the persons be Christians in their lives, and Christians in their profession"—I would heartily adopt the glowing words of Jeremy Taylor—"If they acknowledge the Eternal Son of God for their Master and Lord, and live in all relations as becomes persons making such professions, why then should I hate such persons whom God loves and who love God, who are partakers of Christ and Christ hath a title to them, who dwell in Christ and Christ in them, because their understandings

[1] H. C. McCook, *The Gospel in Nature*, 55.

have not been brought up like mine . . . have not the same opinions that I have, and do not determine their school questions to the sense of my sect or interest?" God grant that we may so prize and exalt Christ above all, extol and magnify His person so incomparably over all, that the common devotion to Him may annul and bear down the divisions which keep us asunder, and make us again to be outwardly one as He left His first disciples one, until we reach that yet richer and Diviner unity which was to be the reward and consummation of abiding in the fellowship which He established.[1]

[1] A. J. Mason, *The Principles of Ecclesiastical Unity*, 64.

# The Encompassing God.

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## The Encompassing God.

**Thou hast beset me behind and before,**
**And laid thine hand upon me.—Ps. cxxxix. 5.**

1. That God besets us behind and before and has laid His hand on us is the crowning glory, as it is also the perpetual mystery, of human life. In the light of this truth nothing seems small or negligible. Every incident and every association of our lot takes on a new meaning. The stars have a fresh message for us; the flowers look up to us with intelligent faces; God walks in His garden still, and His voice calls for our recognition. Nothing becomes impossible for us; our strength is sufficient for our day, and new ideals press upon us for acceptance as soon as we have faithfully done the work of the immediate present.

2. We speak of God as a *Person*, for want of a better term to express the thought that He is self-conscious and freely acting, of a kind with ourselves in all that makes for the difference between the realm of the Personal and that of the Impersonal, though infinitely higher, not only than we *are*, but even than we can *conceive*. But we reach an even greater truth when we say that God is an all-encompassing *Spirit*, in whom we live and move and have our being, a Presence everywhere and in all things, a Source of boundless energy and influence, the Cause and Sustainer and Hope of all that is. There is nothing inconsistent in these propositions. It is the same God who, being a pervasive Spirit and having created us in His own image, maintains relations of tender watchfulness over His children.

Two great ideas underlie this beautiful text:

I. God's Intimate Knowledge of Man.
II. God's Individual Care of Man.

## I.

### God's Intimate Knowledge of Man.

1. God accurately and exhaustively knows all that a man knows of himself. Every man who lives amid Christian influences has an intimate knowledge of himself. He thinks of the moral quality of some of his own feelings. He considers the ultimate tendency of some of his own actions. In other words, there is a part of his inward and his outward life with which he is well acquainted; of which he has a distinct apprehension. There are some thoughts of his mind at which he blushes at the very time of their origin, because he is vividly aware what they are, and what they mean. There are some emotions of his heart at which he trembles and recoils at the very moment of their uprising, because he perceives clearly that they involve a very malignant depravity. There are some actings of his will of whose wickedness he is painfully conscious at the very instant of their rush and movement.

Now, in reference to all this intimate self-knowledge, man is not superior to God. He may be certain that in no respect does he know more of himself than the Searcher of hearts knows. He may be an uncommonly thoughtful person, and little of what is done within his soul may escape his notice; let us make the extreme supposition that he arrests every thought as it rises, and looks at it; that he analyzes every sentiment as it swells his heart; that he scrutinizes every purpose as it determines his will —even if he should have such a thorough and profound self-knowledge as this, God knows him equally profoundly and equally thoroughly. This process of self-inspection may even go on indefinitely, and the man grow more and more thoughtful, and obtain an everlastingly augmenting knowledge of what he is and what he does, so that it seems to him that he is going down so far on that path which "the vulture's eye hath not seen," is penetrating so deeply into those dim and shadowy regions of consciousness where the external life takes its very first start, as to be beyond the reach of any eye and the ken of any intelligence but his own; and then he may be sure that God understands the thought that is afar off, and deep down, and that at this lowest

range and plane in his experience He besets him behind and before.

¶ Let us adore God for the streams of bounty which flow unceasingly from the fountains of His life, to all His countless creatures. But, on the other hand, beware lest in thus enlarging your view of the Infinite One, you lose your hold of the correlative truth—that though all beings of all worlds are His care, though His mind thus embraces the universe, He is yet as mindful of you, as if that universe were blotted out, and you alone survived to receive the plenitude of His care.[1]

2. Although the Creator designed that man should thoroughly understand himself, and gave him the power of self-inspection that he might use it faithfully and apply it constantly, yet man is exceedingly ignorant of himself. Men, says an old writer, are nowhere less at home than at home. Very few persons practise serious self-examination at all, and none employ the power of self-inspection with that carefulness and diligence with which they ought. Hence men generally are unacquainted with much that goes on within their own minds and hearts.

But God knows perfectly all that man might but does not know of himself. Though the transgressor is ignorant of much of his sin, because, at the time of its commission he sins blindly as well as wilfully, and unreflectingly as well as freely; and though the transgressor has forgotten much of that small amount of sin of which he was conscious, and by which he was pained, at the time of its perpetration; though on the side of man the powers of self-inspection and memory have accomplished so little towards this preservation of man's sin, yet God knows it all, and remembers it all. "He compasseth man's path, and his lying down, and is acquainted with all his ways." "There is nothing covered, therefore, that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known. Whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops." The Creator of the human mind has control over its powers of self-inspection and of memory, and when the proper time comes, He will compel these endowments to perform their legitimate functions, and do their appointed work.

[1] W. E. Channing.

¶ You will never know what the Psalmist had in mind till you come upon a young mother all alone with her laughing babe. The hours are not long. The house is not lonesome for her, though she has been left for the day. She has her babe. See, it lies all uncovered in her lap! The mother is fair, but the child is fairer. She counts its fingers, she pulls its toes, she kisses its dimples, she pats its pudgy arms, she studies its features, she sounds to their depths its eyes and matches their colour with the skies. She helps it to stand. She coaxes it to walk. She teaches it to talk. She infects it with laughter. She bathes it with love. She tells it her secrets. She cries over it for joy. She multiplies its happiness and bears its sorrow. Mother and babe—in all the world there is no other vision one-half so fair. There is no knowledge like love, no explorer like solicitude. She knows every strength, every weakness, every beauty, every mark or scar, every characteristic, every disposition, every tendency, every fault, every charm. The mother has searched her babe and knows it. A mother with her babe in her arms—that is the Psalmist's picture of the tender care of God for men.[1]

3. Let us not forget that there is a bright as well as a dark side to this picture. For if God's exhaustive knowledge of the human heart wakens dread in one of its aspects, it starts infinite hope in another. If that Being has gone down into these depths of human depravity, and seen it with a more abhorring glance than could ever shoot from a finite eye, and yet has returned with a cordial offer to forgive it all, and a hearty proffer to cleanse it all away, then we can lift up the eye in adoration and in hope. There has been an infinite forbearance and condescension. The worst has been seen, and that too by the holiest of beings, and yet eternal glory is offered to us! God knows from personal examination the worthlessness of human character, with a thoroughness and intensity of knowledge of which man has no conception; and yet, in the light of that knowledge, in the very flame of that intuition, He has devised a plan of mercy and redemption.

¶ Might I follow the bent of my own mind, my pen, such as it is, should be wholly employed in setting forth the infinite love of God to mankind in Christ Jesus, and in endeavouring to draw all men to the belief and acknowledgment of it. The one great mercy of God, which makes the one, only happiness of all

[1] N. M. Waters.

mankind, so justly deserves all our thoughts and meditations, so highly enlightens and improves every mind that is attentive to it, so removes all the evils of this present world, so sweetens every state of life, and so inflames the heart with the love of every Divine and human virtue, that he is no small loser whose mind is either by writing or reading detained from the view and contemplation of it.[1]

## II.

### God's Individual Care of Man.

"Thou hast beset me." Even words may fall into bad company. Because of its association many a noble word is misjudged. "Beset" is such a word. We speak of the "besetments" of life. We pray about the "sin which doth so easily beset us." Job was beset with calamities. A traveller from Oriental lands tells us that at Cairo he was beset with dogs and beggars. A young man goes wrong, and through his tears of shame he tells how for months he has been literally beset with temptations. "Beset" we associate with evil. That is the ordinary use of the word. But that is not the Psalmist's use. It is the glory of the Scriptures that they are always finding gold where men see only clay. The Psalmist takes this word out of man's vocabulary and gives it a heavenly meaning. "Beset" is a strong word and it shall not belong to evil. The writer snatches it out of its evil surroundings and makes it spell out for evermore the love of God. "Thou hast beset me behind and before." He is talking about God. It is a startling statement. It is like the old prophet and his servant. So long we have been pursued by evil. Every day we have seen the Syrians coming up against us. Every morning we have seen them closer, having moved up in the night. We are beset by them. That is the testimony of the generations. And now on this morning our eyes are opened, and, lo! the hills are "full of horses and chariots of fire." Like the young man we cry: "They that be with us are more than they that be with them." "We are besieged by goodness." God has beset us!

¶ When I was a very little boy I knew my father loved me. I took it as a matter of course; but I did not see that he had me

[1] William Law, *An Earnest and Serious Answer.*

in mind very much. When I was very little I thought houses and clothes and food and money were a matter of course, and I did not know anybody worked very hard to provide them for me. It takes a child quite a while to know that these ever-present necessaries are not free for the using like air for breathing, but that they cost somebody a great deal of sweat and anxiety. When I grew older I knew of course that father did it all—the home and food and clothes and money; but I did not know how much he did it for me. I saw but little of him. I heard him talk only a little. He was away and so busy and all wrapped up in his farm and mill and cattle and horses. That was his business and care. I was just incidental. Then I grew up to adult life and I saw it all as it was. He did not think about anything but his children. His mind was only a little on his farm. It was on his home. He did not care for his business except as it ministered to his family. His business was fatherhood; his farm was only the incident. He was laying his plans ahead. If the children were hungry, there was bread. If winter came, there were clothes. When they were old enough, there was a teacher ready for them. When temptation came to do wrong, there was also close at hand an enticement to do good. Once he was sick, and he thought, and we all thought, he was going to die. I heard him talking to mother and grandfather, laying out all his business plans, and I heard him say over and over: "That money is not to be touched beforehand. It is there to take Nancy to college." He even spoke of the after years and said: "When the girls marry, I want them to have so and so." Child that I was, I began to realize that father carried us all on his heart, and that in his plans he thought not only of the present, but took in all the future years. He really with his care and foresight "beset me behind and before."[1]

1. "Thou hast beset me behind." God stands between us and our enemies in the rear. He defends us from the hostility of our own past. He does not cut us away from our yesterdays. Consequences are not annihilated; their operations are changed. They are transformed from destructives into constructives. The sword becomes a ploughshare; the implement of destruction becomes an agent of moral and spiritual culture. The Lord "besets me behind," and the sins of yesterday no longer send their poisoned swords into my life. They are changed into the ministers of a finer culture, nourishing godly sorrow, and humility,

[1] N. M. Waters.

and meekness and self-mistrust. The failures and indiscretions of yesterday are no longer creatures of moral impoverishment and despair. He "besets me behind," and they become the teachers of a quiet wisdom and well-proportioned thought.

¶ When you reflect that your evil thoughts and dispositions as well as acts all lie naked and open before the Eye of God, even though they may have escaped the view of man, is this a subject of satisfaction, or of dissatisfaction? Would you have it otherwise if you could, and hide them from Him also? The Christian hates sin, and finding that neither his own nor any other human eye can effectually track it out in him, while he knows it to be the true and only curse and pest of the universe, must rejoice to think that there is One from whom it cannot lie hid—One who will weigh his own case, which he may feel to be to him unfathomable, in the scales of perfect justice and boundless mercy.[1]

2. "And before." God comes between us and the enemy that troubles us from to-morrow, the foe that lies ambushed in futurity and disturbs the peace of to-day. And so He deals with our fears and anxieties, and repeats the miracle of transformation, and changes them from swords into ploughshares. He changes destructive anxiety into a constructive thoughtfulness. He converts a lacerating fretfulness into an energetic contentment. He transforms an abject fear into a holy reverence. He takes the terror out of to-morrow, and enables us to live and labour in a fruitful calm.

When thunders roll
And lightnings slash the sky,
God of the Elements
Stand by.

When warring worlds
Make men in thousands die,
God of the Battle-field
Stand by.

When terrors lurk
And hearts in anguish cry,
God of humanity
Stand by.

[1] *Letters on Church and Religion of W. E. Gladstone*, ii. 159.

When storm blasts rage
And lives in peril lie,
God of the Universe
Stand by.

When life ebbs low
And death is drawing nigh,
God of Eternity
Stand by.[1]

3. "And laid thine hand upon me." When God lays His hand upon us, it means manifold blessing.

(1) *His hand is a restraining hand.*—One of the hardest tasks of parental love is to correct, to restrain. For is it not strange that a child who comes into life so pure from God should hold within it the possible germ of future wrong! The father, watching with proper pride the wonderful growth of thought and passion and will, is fearful of the day when first his child will follow evil. So long as that day is a day delayed, laughter and joy fill the home. But, in a moment, the germ of evil starts into life. It grows from less to more, until one day rebellion oversweeps the prentice soul, and the glamour of heaven is gone. A passion of anger shakes the child to the very foundation of its being. It is the first good-bye to innocence. Then come correction and punishment and restraint. A father's strong arms hold the little body in check, as in the grip of an iron vice. The very touch of love in such a moment irritates. For anger maddens every soul. But there the father sits, in stern silence, holding his child in restraint, until he has gained the mastery. And when the passion has spent itself, then come floods of tears from the poor little penitent soul as he lays his conquered head upon his father's breast.

¶ The great American orator Daniel Webster, being asked what was his greatest thought, replied, "The greatest thought that ever entered my mind was that of my personal responsibility to a personal God." In a famous speech he expanded the thought: "There is no evil that we cannot either face or flee from, but the consciousness of duty disregarded. A sense of duty pursues us ever. It is omnipresent, like the Deity. If we take to ourselves the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the

[1] L. Leigh, *The White Gate and Other Poems*, 40.

sea, duty performed or duty violated is still with us, for our happiness or our misery. If we say that darkness shall cover us, in the darkness as in the light our obligations are yet with us. We cannot escape their power nor fly from their presence. They are with us in this life, will be with us at its close, and, in that sense of inconceivable solemnity which lies yet farther onward, we shall still find ourselves surrounded by the consciousness of duty to pain us wherever it has been violated, and to console us so far as God has given us grace to perform it."

If you would see the same principle in life, open your Shakespeare; imagine yourself on Bosworth field, before the tents of Richard and of Richmond; hear the ghosts as they rise and speak. At the door of Richard's tent—

> Let me sit heavy on thy soul to-morrow!
> Think, how thou stab'dst me in my prime of youth
> At Tewksbury: despair, therefore, and die!

At Richmond's tent—

> Be cheerful, Richmond; for the wronged souls
> Of butcher'd princes fight in thy behalf:
> King Henry's issue, Richmond, comforts thee.

On Richard's own confession—

> O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me! . . .
> Methought the souls of all that I had murder'd
> Came to my tent; and every one did threat
> To-morrow's vengeance on the head of Richard.

Ghosts all, yet speaking in the voice of reality. Conscience wears the form of a haunting fiend as well as of a guiding friend. Yet it is no haunting fiend. "Thou hast beset me . . . and laid thine hand upon me." "I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee."

The promise is fulfilled as truly in the condemning voice of conscience as in our conviction of God's power and peace.[1]

(2) *The hand suggests the ministry of guidance.*—That is a most suggestive word, constantly in the book of the prophet Isaiah: "And the Lord said unto me with a strong hand." Speech by strong graspings! Suggestion by grips! Guidance by the creation of a mighty impulse! The Lord declared His will unto the prophet Isaiah by implanting in his life the sense of a tremendous imperative, a terrific "must," a consciousness which the

[1] F. Ealand, *The Spirit of Life*, 55.

prophet expressed under the symbol of the grasp of a "strong hand." "Thy right hand shall guide me."

¶ There is surely nothing remote or obscure in the theme of God's guidance. It is relevant and immediate to everybody. We differ in many things and in many ways; we differ in age and in calling, in physical fitness and in mental equipment; we differ in knowledge and accomplishments; we are greatly different in temperament, and therefore in the character of our daily strife. But in one thing we are all alike—we are pilgrims travelling between life and death, on an unknown road, not knowing how or when the road may turn; not knowing how or when it may end; and we are in urgent need of a Greatheart who is acquainted with every step of the way. We are all in need of a leader who will be our guide by the "waters of rest," and also in the perilous ways of the heights.[1]

(3) *The hand suggests the ministry of soothing and comfort.*—The nurse lays her cool hand upon the burning brow of her patient, and he exclaims, "How lovely that is!" And when we come into a sudden crisis in life, and are tempted to become feverish, and "heated hot with burning fears," the Lord lays His cooling hand upon us, and we grow calm again. "And Jesus touched her, and the fever left her."

¶ Dr. Miller never forgot the universal need of comfort. "We forget how much sorrow there is in the world," he one day remarked. "Why, there are hearts breaking all about us. I have made it a rule of my ministry never to preach a sermon without giving some word of comfort to the sorrowing. In every congregation there is sure to be some soul hungering for consolation. I spent the afternoon of Wednesday with two or three sore sufferers. In conversation with them I spoke freely of their trials and their comforts. . . . Comfort is one of life's best blessings. Even the comfort of earthly friends is soothing and sweet. But the real comfort which the Holy Spirit brings to the heart of the Christian mourner is infinitely better. . . . It is better to go into the furnace and get the image of Christ out of the fire, than to be saved from the fire and fail of the blessed likeness."[2]

[1] J. H. Jowett, *Things that Matter Most*, 111.

[2] J. T. Faris, *Jesus and I are Friends: Life of Dr. J. R. Miller*, 102.

# The Searcher of Hearts.

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## The Searcher of Hearts.

**Search me, O God, and know my heart:**
**Try me, and know my thoughts:**
**And see if there be any way of wickedness in me,**
**And lead me in the way everlasting.—Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24.**

1. No intellectual man has ever dared to despise this poem, which has been called "the crown of all the psalms," and its teaching has had to be reckoned with by all schools of thought for many centuries. It is one of those pieces of literature which Bacon said should be "chewed and digested." There is much food for the intellect here; but to every man who is anxious about the culture of his spirit we would say: "Test your heart by this psalm. If your heart is of steel, it will be attracted by its teaching, as by a magnet; if you find nothing in it to move you to reverence, wonder, penitence, and prayer, be sure that your heart is not true, that you are in a morally perilous condition."

2. The Psalmist sets forth in poetry what theology calls the doctrine of the Divine Omniscience. He believes in Jehovah, the God of all the earth, and therefore believes in a Providence so universal that nothing is missed. It is not an intellectual dogma to him, but a spiritual intuition. It is not stated as an abstraction of thought, but flows from the warm personal relation between God and man, which is the great revelation of the Bible. God's providence is everywhere, but it does not dissipate itself in a mere general supervision of creation. It is all-seeing, all-surrounding, all-embracing, but it is not diffused in matter and dispersed through space. It extends—and this is the wonder of it—to the individual: O Lord, Thou hast searched *me*, and known *me*.

3. The practical ethical thought suggested to the Psalmist by such a conception is the question, How can God, the pure and holy One, with such an intimate and unerring knowledge, tolerate

wicked men? He feels that God cannot but be against evil, no matter what appearances seem to suggest that God does not care. The doom of evil must be certain; and so the Psalmist solemnly dissociates himself from the wicked men who hate and blaspheme God. And the conclusion is simply and humbly to throw open the heart and soul to God, accepting the fact that He cannot be deceived, praying God to search him and purify him and lead him. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

¶ In the general reform of conventual and monastic life, the Abbey of Port Royal had set a striking example. Behind its cloistered walls were gathered some of the purest and most devoted women of France, under the strict rule of Mère Angélique Arnauld. The spiritual directions of St. François de Sales, who loved the Port-Royalists, had tempered firmness with gentleness, and given a charm to the pursuit of personal holiness; the Petites Ecoles of the abbey rivalled the educational establishments of the Jesuits. But St. Cyran, who succeeded François de Sales as spiritual director, was suspected of heresy, and Port Royal was involved in the charge. Persecution fell upon the community. It was to a psalm that they appealed. "The sisters of Port Royal," says Blaise Pascal (and his own sister was one of the first victims of the persecution), "astonished to hear it said that they were in the way of perdition, that their confessors were leading them to Geneva by teaching them that Jesus Christ was neither in the Eucharist nor at the right hand of God, and knowing that the charge was false, committed themselves to God, saying with the Psalmist, 'See if there be any way of wickedness in me.'"[1]

## I.

### The Searching of God.

1. The Psalmist realized that he could not thoroughly search himself. We have all of us tendencies and inclinations which we cannot gauge and do not know the force or the power of. We have depths and abysses in our natures which no human measuring line can fathom. Our souls are so disordered and disturbed by the crossing of many varied feelings, high and low, clashing and

[1] R. E. Prothero, *The Psalms in Human Life*, 214.

fretting against each other, good thoughts mingled with so much that is base, pure high feelings with so much that is low and degraded. We have in us sometimes perhaps more good than we realize, or more evil than we ever guessed. There is in us, not only our sinful acts, but also a deep spirit of wickedness, a mystery of evil, which no human power can comprehend. Said the prophet truly, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" No one can. Not even ourselves, who think we know ourselves well. We do not know what is in us, what powers or capabilities we have for good or for evil.

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
Decidedly can try us;
He knows each chord, its various tone,
Each spring, its various bias.

¶ One of the precepts which Thales the great philosopher, who lived about the same time as Josiah king of Judah, inculcated was, "Know thyself," and it is a precept full of the highest sense and wisdom. It was regarded by the ancients as a duty of paramount importance, and received by them with all the authority of a Divine command. It is not as a matter of curiosity, but of deepest necessity, that we should have a thorough acquaintance with the state in which we are before God, and should try to see ourselves and to estimate ourselves, not as others do, but as God does, for it is a subject on which we are apt to make great and dangerous mistakes, and it is one of which many are in complete ignorance.[1]

2. The Psalmist is sure that God has perfect knowledge of him. He is as certain of God as he is of his own existence; indeed it is not too much to say that it is only as he is conscious of being searched and known by God—only as he is overwhelmed by contact with a Spirit which knows him better than he knows himself—that he rises to any adequate sense of what his own being and personality mean. He is revealed to himself by God's search; he knows himself through God. Speaking practically—and in religion everything is practical—God alone can overcome atheism, and this is how He overcomes it. He does not put within our reach arguments which point to theistic conclusions; He gives

[1] R. Stephen, *Divine and Human Influence*, i. 262.

us the experience which makes this psalm intelligible, and forces us also to cry, "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me."

¶ It is a fact well known to seamen that objects under water, such as shoals and sunken rocks, become visible, or more visible, when viewed from a height; and it is customary at sea, when a sunken object is suspected of lying in a vessel's course, but cannot be seen from the deck, to send a man aloft, when the higher he can climb the mast the farther will his vision penetrate beneath the waves. From the top of a lofty cliff the depth is seen better still; whilst the elevation of a balloon enables the spectator to see most perfectly beneath the surface, and to detect the sunken mines, torpedoes, and the like which may be concealed there. Now, just as there is an optical reason why the depth is best penetrated from the height, so there is a moral reason why the holy God best knows the plagues and perils of the human heart. He who from the pure heaven of eternal light and purity looks down into the depths of the heart is cognizant of its defects long before they report themselves in the creature-consciousness.[1]

¶ Colonel Seely, shortly before he resigned office as Secretary of State for War in the spring of 1914, unfolded in the House of Commons the Supplementary Army Estimates; and, speaking of the vote for the Army Air Service, he gave a striking instance of the range of vision from a height. From an aeroplane up 5000 feet in the air one could see, he explained, quite clearly every detail of the landscape. An airman could perceive from that not only the roads and the hedges beneath, but, for instance, whether there were two horses or one attached to a cart going along a road. Persons could be seen walking in the streets of a town. "How easy then," concluded the War Secretary, "to see any troops! Thus the commander of an army without aeroplanes—other things being equal—is doomed if faced by a force with aeroplanes, for every movement of the enemy's troops, except at night or in a fog, can be watched and reported by the air scouts."

3. The Psalmist was satisfied that God would search him fully, fairly and impartially. The word which is rendered "search" is a very emphatic and picturesque one. It means to dig deep. God is prayed, as it were, to make a section into the Psalmist, and lay bare his inmost nature, as men do in a railway cutting, layer after layer, going ever deeper down till the bed-rock is reached. "Search me"—dig into me, bring the deep-lying parts to light—

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Fatal Barter*, 101.

"and know my heart"; the centre of my personality, my inmost self.

This prayer is also an expression of absolute willingness to submit to the searching process. God is represented in the text as seeking into the secrets of a man's heart, not that God may know, but that the man may know. By His Spirit He will come into the innermost corners of our nature, if this prayer is a real expression of our desire. And there the illumination of His presence will flash light into all the dark corners of our experience and of our personality.

¶ Men may applaud or revile, and make a man think differently of himself, but He judgeth of a man according to his secret walk. How difficult is the work of self-examination! Even to state to you, imperfectly, my own mind, I found to be no easy matter. Nay, St. Paul says, "I judge not mine own self, for he that judgeth me is the Lord." That is, though he was not conscious of any allowed sin, yet he was not thereby justified, for God might perceive something of which he was not aware. How needful then the prayer of the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and try my heart, and see if there be any evil way in me."[1]

## II.

### The Tests to which we are Subjected.

1. We are searched and known by *the slow and steady passing of the years.*—There is a revealing power in the flight of time, just because time is the minister of God. In heaven there will be no more time; there will be no more need of any searching ministry. There we shall know even as we are known, in the burning and shining of the light of God. But here, where the light of God is dimmed and broken, we are urged forward through the course of years, and the light of the passing years achieves on earth what the light of the Presence will achieve in glory. He is a wise father who knows his child, but he is a wiser child who knows himself. Untested by actual contact with the world, we dream our dream in the sunshine of the morning. And then comes life with all its hard reality, with the changes and the calling of the years, and

[1] *Life and Letters of the Rev. Henry Martyn*, 28.

we turn round on the swift flight of time, and say, "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me." We may not have achieved anything splendid. Our life may have moved along in quiet routine, not outwardly different from the lives of thousands. Yet, however dull and quietly uneventful, God has so ordered the flight of time for us that we know far more about ourselves to-night than we knew in the upland freshness of the morn. Brought into touch with duty and with man, we have begun to see our limitations. We know in a measure what we cannot do; thank God, we know in a measure what we can do. And underneath it all we have discerned the side on which our nature leans away to heaven, and the other side on which there is the door that opens on to the filthiness of hell. It does not take any terrible experience to reach the certainty of power and weakness. The common days, which make the common years, slowly and inevitably show it. So by the pressure of evolving time—and it is God, not we, who so evolves it—for better or for worse we come to say, "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me."

¶ 1 Jan. 1878. Marine Parade, Brighton, 6 a.m. When one thinks of the immensity of time and of the Christian hope that there is endless existence before us, one is perplexed that this infinity of time should take its character from a few years that seem to bear no proportion to it. One observes, however, that in the time here by far the greatest portion is determined by certain hours or it may be minutes.

> In itself a thought,
> A slumbering thought, is capable of years—

says Byron, and certain it is that all our lives are under the influence of moments when fresh convictions dawned on us, or when we made some important resolution, or when we passed through some special trial. With most of us the greater part of our life seems merely wasted. We eat, drink, and sleep, join in meaningless chit-chat, pay calls and the like. Others get through an immense amount of work; but at times we have glimpses which show us that life consists neither in chit-chat nor in work, and that even the latter needs something in it, but not of it, before it can be good for anything "in the kingdom of heaven." Perhaps the scanty moments we give to prayer may in importance be the chief part of our existence.[1]

[1] *Life and Remains of the Rev. R. H. Quick*, 70.

2. God searches us by *the responsibilities He lays upon us.*—It is in our duties and not in our romance that the true self is searched and known. Think of those servants in the parable who received the talents. Could you have gauged their character before they got the talents? Were they not all respectable and honest and seemingly worthy of their master's confidence? But to one of the servants the master gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, and what distinguished and revealed the men was the use they made of their responsibility. They were not searched by what they had to suffer; the men were searched by what they had to do. They were revealed by what their master gave, and by the use they made of what they got. And so is it with all of us to whom God has given a task, a post, a talent—it is not only a gift to bless our neighbour; it is a gift to reveal us to ourselves.

¶ See, I hold a sovereign in my hand. It appears to bear the image and superscription of the King. That is merely an optical illusion. It bears *my own* image and superscription. I have earned it, and it is mine. But now that it is mine, the trouble begins. For that sovereign becomes part of myself and will henceforth represent a pound's worth of *me*! If I am a bad man, I shall spend it in folly, and accelerate the forces that make for the world's undoing. If I am a bad man, that is to say, it will be a bad sovereign, however truly it may seem to ring. If I am a good man, I shall spend it in clean commerce, and enlist it among the forces that tend to the uplift of my brothers. Yes, gold is very good if *we* are very good, and very bad if *we* are very bad. Here is the song of the sovereign—

Dug from the mountain-side, washed in the glen,
Servant am I or the master of men;
Steal me, I curse you;
Earn me, I bless you;
Grasp me and hoard me, a fiend shall possess you;
Lie for me, die for me;
Covet me, take me,
Angel or devil, I am what you make me![1]

3. God searches us *by bringing new influences to bear upon our lives.*—Troubles and temptations are great discoverers of human

[1] F. W. Boreham, *Mountains in the Mist*, 62.

character. Our passions and special inclinations may lie like some minerals, far down, and we may bore long and find no trace of their existence, but by and by we may pierce deeper, and a thick seam of evil may be found. Or our nature may, like a breakwater, stand long, and seem secure, unharmed by many a gale, but some fiercer storm, some stronger onslaught of temptation, may overthrow it, or some single stone may be dislodged, or some joint weakened, and the sea works its way in, and the whole is upset, dashed, and pounded to ruin. So you may resist long, and come unscathed through much evil, but it comes with fiercer power at some time, or it dashes upon you suddenly or unexpectedly, advancing upon you not like the long roll of the ocean, with steady force, but with a quick impact, a sudden surprise—as temptation came to Peter—and your power of resistance is destroyed.

¶ Just as engineers are not satisfied with respect to the soundness and durability of iron girders or links of ships' cables merely because these look well, but proceed to test them by pressure, and ascertain the amount of strain they will bear, and the weight they will sustain, so by the rough handling of the world's vexations and by the strain of trouble and sorrow you must be tried, to show what you really are: whether your temper patiently endures this provocation, whether your pride will submit to that mortification, your vanity to that slight, your passions to that force of temptation, your faith to that severe disappointment, your love to that heavy sacrifice.

In the making of great iron castings, through some defect in the mould, portions of air may lurk in the heart of the iron, and cavities like those of an honey-comb may be formed in the interior of the beam, but the defects and flaws may be effectively concealed under the outer skin; when, however, it is subjected to a severe strain it gives way. So under the stress of some great trial, the hollowness of the nature may be revealed and secret faults and evils exposed, and the man appears in what people say is a changed character. In reality that is his true character. If metal be real iron, the blast of the furnace will temper it into steel, and if there is reality and truth in the nature, trial will develop its finer qualities; but if these do not exist, trial will only expose that nature's inherent badness and make it worse.[1]

[1] R. Stephen, *Divine and Human Influence*, i. 285.

4. God tests us *by holding up to us the mirror of another's life.* —We never know ourselves until we see ourselves divested of all the trappings of self-love. It was thus that God dealt with David, when he had so terribly sinned. For all the depth and the grandeur of his character, David was strangely blind to his own guilt. But then came Nathan with his touching story of the man who had been robbed of his ewe lamb, and all that was best in David was afire at the abhorrent action of that robber.

Especially when we draw near to Christ, who knows what is in all of us, and whose eye could read and single out the traitor whom no one suspected; when, too, He is looking at us and scanning our deepest hearts, reading in them the love we have to Him and the faith we have in Him, or detecting the treachery and perfidy that may lurk within us, surely it is right that we should ask Him to search us and try us and let us know and see ourselves as He knows and sees us. Surely we should ask Him to purify our hearts from every evil thought and feeling, and so to fill them with His love that when He asks us, as He asked Peter, "Lovest thou me?" we may be able to say truly, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

¶ Bishop Westcott preached what was to prove his last sermon in Durham Cathedral on the Saturday preceding his death. It was the annual service of the Durham miners, who came in their thousands to hear the prelate that shortly before had successfully acted as peacemaker in the great North of England coal strike. The Bishop's address has a pathos of its own, since it was his last, and apparently felt by the speaker himself to be his last public utterance. The discourse was as beautiful as it was touching and impressive. Brief, yet complete, and instinct with love, it reveals the man and indicates the secret of his power. The closing words were—

"Since it is not likely that I shall ever address you here again, I have sought to tell you what I have found in a long and laborious life to be the most prevailing power to sustain right endeavour, however imperfectly I have yielded myself to it—even the love of Christ; to tell you what I know to be the secret of a noble life, even glad obedience to His will. I have given you a watchword which is fitted to be the inspiration, the test, and the support of untiring service to God and man: *the love of Christ constraineth us.*"[1]

[1] *Life and Letters of Brooke Foss Westcott*, ii. 394.

## III.

### The Purpose in View.

1. The purpose of this searching is that we may be delivered from our own way of life. "See if there be any way of wickedness in me." The Psalmist recognizes that human life is determined from within. The "way" is first "in" us. How often do we see this! A youth is set in the right path, every assistance is secured for him, every encouragement is given him to pursue it; but he soon breaks away from this, forms other habits, adopts other companions, pursues an altogether different life. He does not follow the path that was opened up to him from the outside, but elects one already traced in his heart. We popularly say of such a wilful soul, "He took his own way, followed his own course." A modern cry calls upon us to "fulfil ourselves." That really means to work out our own fancies, tastes, and passions; to propose our own ideals, be ruled by self-will, take counsel of the pride and passion of our own hearts, chase our own phantoms. But if everybody should "fulfil" himself, it would mean pandemonium; it would be the working out of ignorance, egotism, and lust. This is precisely what the Psalmist deprecates. He urgently pleads for deliverance from himself; from the poisonous particle, the diseased fibre, the false substance and quality which may exist latent within him, waiting for the stimulation of circumstance, opportunity, and association.

(1) Our own way is a way of *emptiness*. Some would translate these words, "any way of idols in me." It signifies the vanity, the unreality, the delusiveness of the objects on which the natural man fixes his ambition and hope. We sometimes say of a thing, "There is nothing in it." We may say this of wealth, honour, pleasure, fame; if we make idols of them, we know that an idol is nothing in the world. If we follow the desires and devices of our own hearts, we walk in a vain show and disquiet ourselves in vain.

(2) Our own way is a way of *pain*. "See if there is any way of grievousness in me." The path of self-fulfilment is hard and bitter. If the roses in the broad road of sensual pleasure, sordid gain, and worldly pride are red, there is no wonder; enough blood

has been shed to make them so. In the forests of South America, where gorgeous orchids dazzle the eyes and gay blossoms carpet the earth, are also creepers furnished with formidable thorns known as "the devil's fishing-hooks"; and as these trail insidiously on the ground, their presence is revealed only by the wounded foot that treads upon them. How closely this pictures the wayward, sensual, worldly life!

(3) Our own way is a way of *destruction*. It does not lead to a goal of lasting felicity, but descends into darkness and despair. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." That is the path and doom of self-fulfilment. We do not know why Solomon, in another place, exactly repeats this warning, unless, perhaps, because it is so immensely significant, and yet so likely to be overlooked. So, then, we must pray that God will not abandon us to ourselves; that we may not be permitted to work out the lurking naughtiness of our heart.

¶ Let a man persevere in prayer and watchfulness to the day of his death, yet he will never get to the bottom of his heart. Though he know more and more of himself as he becomes more conscientious and earnest, still the full manifestation of the secrets there lodged is reserved for another world. And at the last day who can tell the affright and horror of a man who lived to himself on earth, indulging his own evil will, following his own chance notions of truth and falsehood, shunning the cross and the reproach of Christ, when his eyes are at length opened before the throne of God, and all his innumerable sins, his habitual neglect of God, his abuse of his talents, his misapplication and waste of time, and the original unexplored sinfulness of his nature, are brought clearly and fully to his view? Nay, even to the true servants of Christ the prospect is awful. "The righteous," we are told, "will scarcely be saved." Then will the good man undergo the full sight of his sins, which on earth he was labouring to obtain, and partly succeeded in obtaining, though life was not long enough to learn and subdue them all. Doubtless we must all endure that fierce and terrifying vision of our real selves, that last fiery trial of the soul before its acceptance, a spiritual agony and second death to all who are not then supported by the strength of Him who died to bring them safe through it, and in whom on earth they have believed.[1]

[1] J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, i. 48.

2. The searching shows us also how we may walk in God's way. "Lead me in the way everlasting." The greatest test of a man's life is with regard to leadership. Who shall lead? Shall it be the world, or self, or God? There is no advance until that is settled; yet not to have settled it is to have decided in favour of self and sin: "He that is not with me is against me." It is a vital question, and presses for an instant response. This petition obviously includes surrender and submission, and it is to be a constant, continuous thing. It therefore rightly completes the circle of the permanent, universal elements in religion. "The way everlasting," which is so beautifully interpreted in Isaiah xxxv. as "the way of holiness," "an highway," upon which no unclean thing shall walk, but "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein: . . . and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads," has been made clear in Jesus Christ, and He will lead us in triumph along this way towards the everlasting Zion. Let us welcome the leadership of Him who has come to "present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

¶ There is a story told of a good old preacher in Wales, in those early days when preachers used to go about Wales from one end of the country to the other. The custom among Christians who realized their privileges and responsibilities was, when a man had preached the Gospel on one side of a mountain, and had to preach it the following night on the other side, that some kind friend accompanied him a large part of the way, if not the whole way, and thus showed him the path to take. But there were some who begrudged this kindly service. The preacher of whom I speak came on one occasion into contact with one of these. He was a wealthy farmer in the district. The preacher stayed the night at this man's house. On the following morning, when the preacher was about to start, the farmer took out a bit of a slate and traced on it the way over the mountain to the other side, and said, "Now follow this. Here the road divides, and there a path turns to the right," etc. etc. The good old man tried to follow it, and, after making very many mistakes on the wild mountain, succeeded at length in reaching his destination. Some time after that he visited the same people a second time, and preaching from one of those tender references of Paul to those who were so ready to minister to him, significantly said, "Ah, these were a people who, when Paul preached to them, and he had to cross a mountain

in order to preach the next night, would not give him a map on a slate, but would accompany him on the way and further him on his journey." That is exactly it. There are some people who will give you a map on the slate to tell you how to walk through life, and how to enter heaven at last. They give men a few outlines of Christian teaching, or a few precepts of morality. Some are especially fond of referring you to the Sermon on the Mount, adding that you do not need anything else, as you have only to trace what Christ has taught there. What sinful men need is not a map only, although that be traced by a Divine hand. The Psalmist felt that what he wanted was a guide, who would take him by the hand, and hold him up when he was ready to fall, along the rugged journey, or on the brink of a dangerous precipice. "Lead me in the way everlasting."[1]

¶ O might it please God that we should little regard the course of the way we tread, and have our eyes fixed on Him who conducts us, and on the blessed country to which it leads! What should it matter to us whether it is by the desert or by the meadows we go, if God is with us and we go into Paradise?[2]

[1] D. Davies, *Talks with Men, Women and Children*, iii. 495.
[2] St. Francis de Sales, *Spiritual Letters*.

# The Good Providence of God.

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## The Good Providence of God.

**Thou openest thine hand,**
**And satisfiest the desire of every living thing.—Ps. cxlv. 16.**

Surely a delightful psalm—a psalm of great rejoicing for God's goodness to man's weakness; of the Lord's being "nigh," very near to us; of His abundant kindness, of His power and glory, of His open hand, of His feeding the hungry. Surely a psalm to make glad the heart; a song for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery torment of the fiery furnace; a song for every living thing because the Lord, the Lord God is with us. O, all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: praise Him, and magnify Him for ever! He openeth His hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing.

### I.

### God's Pensioners.

**"Every living thing."**

Life makes a claim on God, and whatever desires arise in the living creature by reason of its life, God would be untrue to Himself, a cruel Parent, an unnatural Father, if He did not satisfy them. We do not half enough realize the fact that the condescension of creation lies not only in the act of creating, but in the willing acceptance by the Creator of the bonds under which He thereby lays Himself, obliging Himself to see to the creatures that He has chosen to make.

1. God's pensioners! How did He treat them when He walked with them and talked with them in the days of His earthly life? There was a day when the disciples came in the wilderness to Jesus, saying, "This is a desert place, and now the

time is far passed: send them [the multitudes] away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread." Four thousand men besides women and children was a great family to provide for anywhere, and in such a place as this it would never occur to the disciples that their need could be supplied. *Send them away*—it was a perfectly natural suggestion. Let them go and get their supper, for they are hungry and it is getting late. And Jesus "answered and said unto them, *Give ye them to eat.*" The disciples looked up in wonder—what did the Master mean? Should they go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread? Where was the money to come from? And where should they find so much bread to buy? It was trouble enough at best to find bread for wife and little ones at home; but here in the desert who could spread a table for ten thousand hungry guests? *Give ye them to eat.* It was the voice of God. It was with the consciousness of Divine power that the command was given. It was the impulse of the great bounty that fed the world, the easy familiarity of One who was accustomed to open His hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

2. "Every living thing." What a family is this to be provided for, each with its separate mystery of life, each with life to be sustained, each to be adapted to the light and air, and the subtle influences upon which life depends!

(1) Shall we go into the primeval forest and think of the creatures that roam in its depths? Shall we stand and let the procession pass before us?

¶ If the forest has attractions for the huntsman, how much more interesting it must be to the naturalist. What one who has delighted the world for over fifty years thought of the Guiana forest may be seen in Waterton's *Wanderings*. The enthusiasm of the Yorkshire squire has probably never beeu surpassed. To him the forest was something more than the awful solitude which is the first impression it makes on a stranger—it was full of life. The painter sees patches of colour in the landscape, but the naturalist recognizes the objects which make up the scene. On the sand-reef he distinguishes the footsteps of a jaguar and the remains of his dinner, and can picture what has taken place in the night. A peccary left her hole in a hollow tree at nightfall to feed under the saouari-nut trees. She is quietly cracking the

shells and munching the oily kernels, when the great cat suddenly pounces upon her, and she is torn to pieces and eaten. Sitting on a hollow tree beside the creek, the naturalist sees a thousand flowers and fruits floating down the stream. Now he distinguishes a palm nut snatched under the water by a great fish, or a shoal of small fry feeding on the yellow hog-plums which are so conspicuous against the dark water. Now there is a splash as an alligator comes out of the thicket and dives under, to come up again some distance away, hardly distinguishable except to a trained eye. This reminds us of the protective coloration of every living thing in the forest. Protective contrivances are found in every forest animal. Snakes are nearly invisible in the gloom, notwithstanding their brilliant colours when played upon by the sunlight. With so few atmospheric changes it might be supposed that the tropical forest would give rise to little variation in animals and plants, yet, on the contrary, it is here that nature runs riot, as it were. Nature has been lavish with her gifts. The forest is densely populated—more so, in fact, than any city ever was or could be. There is not room for one in a thousand of the children born therein, so that the fight for standing room is like that of a crowd at a fête. It follows, therefore, that every possible contrivance to gain a position has been developed, and the result is almost perfection. Every living thing is ever moving forward, working towards an end which is unattainable—perfection. But, although this object will never be achieved, the results of the struggle bring it continually a little nearer, and therefore cannot be otherwise than good. Nature does not take care of the weaklings, she provides no asylums; if some of her creatures cannot work for a living they must make room for those who can. Individuals are of little consequence as such, but nevertheless as links in the endless chain they are of the greatest importance. Guiana is pre-eminently a land of forest and stream, and it has followed that both animal and vegetable kingdoms have been developed to suit these conditions. Some are equally at home on land, in the water, or on the trees, those that cannot easily live in the flood being able to climb out of its reach. Then we must also take into account the kinds of food procurable. The interdependence of one animal on another, and these again upon the seeds of trees and even on flowers, is so close, that we can hardly conceive of their existing apart.[1]

(2) Shall we consider the fowls of the air, again a myriad form: the eagle soaring in its height, the birds that fill the woods and

[1] J. Rodway, *In the Guiana Forest*, 31.

valleys with their song, the great hosts of sea-fowl? Who can think of their numbers?

¶ From Cannara Francis went farther south, and east to Bevagna. Brother Leo was his companion, and the sympathy between them, the beauty of the ways bordered with flowers—amongst them the delicate blue and white love-in-a-mist, which fringes the hedgerows in June, blue cornflowers, rose-coloured vetches, purple loose-strife, scarlet poppies, gay larkspurs and sheets of feathery bedstraw—the twitter of birds upon the trees, the fields ripe to the harvest, refreshed and uplifted his heart, so that his joy welled over in song. Where the birds gathered he paused, and, unalarmed, they clustered about his feet and on the branches overhead. In an ecstasy of tenderness for his "little brothers" he spoke to them of their Creator, whose care for them deserved their love and praise. "For He has made you," he said, "the noblest of His creatures; He has given you the pure air for a home: you need neither to sow nor to reap, for He cares for you, He protects you, He leads you whither you should go." And the birds rejoiced at his words, opening their wings and fluttering and chirping as if to thank him for rating them so precious in God's sight. Then moving amongst them, he blessed them and went on his way.[1]

(3) Shall we go outside them to the world of plant life? What endless diversity is here in the grass of the meadow, the corn of the field, the crowded hedgerow, the tangled copse, the leafy forest, the mossy rocks, the weeds that hide beneath the sea, the flowers that fill the earth with beauty and the air with fragrance, the great trees festooned with creepers!

¶ The whole science of flowers to the thoughtful mind in these days is full to the brim of the most delightful and suggestive poetry. And how much better fitted is it now than ever before for the illustration of moral and religious truth! Science has anointed our blind eyes with its own magic eye-salve, and enabled us indeed to see men as trees walking. We see our own human nature reflected in the nature of the flowers of the field in a previously unknown way. We see the analogue of the mother's bosom in the milky substance of the two cotyledons of the seed for the primary nourishing of the young embryo which they contain. We see the lover's joy in the spring blossoming of the flowers, and the loveliness with which Nature then adorns her bridal bower; and we see our own selfishness in the spreading of

[1] A. M. Stoddart, *Francis of Assisi*, 134.

the flat leaves of the daisy around its roots close to the earth, so that no other plant may grow beside it, and it may get whatever space and air and sunshine it needs for its own development. He who considers the lilies how they grow, in the manner in which recent science teaches us, and in the light which modern investigation has shed upon their marvels and mysteries, will learn lessons which will make him wiser and better. It has been suggestively said that "the flower is the type of the universe, and the lily of the field is solving over again all problems." It is not perfect creation, complete all at once, that we see, but God sowing seeds, making things to grow by outside circumstances and living forces within; slow, gradual evolution from the nebula to the full-orbed star, and from the chaotic star to the skilfully ordered and richly furnished earth, fit to be man's dwelling-place, and the scene of probation for immortal souls.[1]

## II.

### God's Open Hand.

**"Thou openest thine hand."**

Now look from nature to nature's God—"Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." God satisfies the desires of every living thing. Our desires both lift us up and set us down. Our desires mark us off from all other living creatures. Where others have needs only, ours is this dignity—we desire.

1. *Desire*—it is a dainty word. It were much that He should satisfy the need, the want; but He goes far beyond that. Pity is moved to meet our need; duty may sometimes look after our wants; but to satisfy the *desire* implies a tender watchfulness, a sweet and gracious knowledge of us, an eagerness to bless. God is never satisfied until He has satisfied our desires.

¶ Embodied life is ever seeking, and it must find, whether embodied or disembodied. From the amœba to the archangel all forms and modes of life are on their way towards satiety; everything must reach its due fulfilment, though probably not on this plane; it would be a poor destiny that could complete itself on

[1] Hugh Macmillan, *The Poetry of Plants*, 9.

earth. One wonders what the destiny of the lower creation is; but we may rest assured

> That not a worm is clov'n in vain;
> That not a moth with vain desire
> Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,
> Or but subserves another's gain.[1]

(1) What is the object of desire to a man who loves God? God. What is the object of desire to a righteous man? Righteousness. And these are the desires which God is sure to fulfil to us. Therefore there is only one region in which it is safe and wise to cherish longings, and it is the region of the spiritual life where God imparts Himself. Everywhere else there will be disappointments—thank Him for them. Nowhere else is it absolutely true that He will fulfil our desires. But in this region it is. Whatever any of us desire to have of God, we are sure to get. We open our mouths and He fills them. In the Christian life desire is the measure of possession, and to long is to have. And there is nowhere else where it is absolutely, unconditionally and universally true that to wish is to possess, and to ask is to have. There is, however, an eternal element in all desire, which, ultimately, will find its fruition in the love of God.

¶ Dear children, ye ought not to cease from hearing or declaring the word of God because you do not alway live according to it, nor keep it in mind. For inasmuch as you love it and crave after it, it will assuredly be given unto you; and you shall enjoy it for ever with God, according to the measure of your desire after it. St. Bernard has said: "Man, if thou desirest a noble and holy life, and unceasingly prayest to God for it, if thou continue constant in this thy desire, it will be granted unto thee without fail, even if only in the day or hour of thy death; and if God should not give it thee then, thou shalt find it in Him in eternity: of this be assured." Therefore do not relinquish your desire, though it be not fulfilled immediately, or though ye may swerve from your aspirations, or even forget them for a time. It were a hard case if this were to cut you off for ever from the end of your being. But when ye hear the word of God, surrender yourselves wholly to it, as if for eternity, with a full purpose of will to retain it in your mind and to order your life according to it; and let it sink down right deep into your heart as into an eternity. If

[1] R. J. Campbell.

afterward it should come to pass that you let it slip, and never think of it again, yet the love and aspiration which once really existed live for ever before God, and in Him ye shall find the fruit thereof; that is, to all eternity it shall be better for you than if you had never felt them.[1]

(2) The thing we desire in every object of desire is greater than we know; it is greater than the object itself as that object now is. God enlarges our soul by means of the desire, and will give us vision by and by of the wonder and glory of the reality of which we have all the time been in search, though only dimly knowing what it was. The soul's desires are not illusory and ephemeral; they are in essence spiritual and Divine, though we so often misdirect and degrade them.

¶ The desire after God does not begin on our part. God has not hidden Himself from man for the purpose that He might allow His creature, His lost child, to cry after Him. We love God because He first loved us. If we desire God, it is because God hath first desired us. God asks for our heart as His tabernacle; He surrounds us night and day with tender, pathetic appeals: He says, "If any man love me, I will come in, and make my abode in his heart." He plies us, as mother never plied her prodigal child, to come home again; and there is not one word of grace, or pathos, or tender entreaty, which He has withheld from His argument, if haply He might find His way, with our glad consent, into our heart of hearts. Do you desire God? It is because God first desired you. Do you feel kindlings of love towards Him? Your love is of yesterday. His love comes up from unbeginning time, and goes on to unending eternity![2]

2. "Thou openest thine hand."—What does this bring home to us? Does it not in the first place set forth the marvellous liberality of God? This means that God's creatures do not wait upon Him in vain. He does not disappoint their need and their expectation. When the due season comes, His hand opens to fill their hearts with food and gladness. He does not give grudgingly or sparingly, but with full and open hand. Nor does He trim and carve His gifts according to the measure of our merit. If He were to do that we should fare badly, for we have all been undutiful children. He even gives us freely when we deserve not His goodness but His condemnation.

[1] *Tauler's Life and Sermons* (trans. by S. Winkworth), 294. [2] Joseph Parker.

(1) "Thou openest thine hand." That is enough. But God cannot satisfy our deepest desires by any such short and easy method. There is a great deal more to be done by Him before the aspirations of love and fear and longing for righteousness can be fulfilled. He has to breathe Himself into us. Lower creatures have enough when they have the meat that drops from His hand. They know and care nothing for the hand that feeds. But God's best gifts cannot be separated from Himself. They are Himself, and in order to "satisfy the desire of every living thing" there is no way possible, even to Him, but the impartation of Himself to the waiting heart.

¶ What means it to have a God, or what is God? The answer is: God is one from whom we expect all good, and in whom we can take refuge in all our needs, so that to have God is nothing else than to trust and believe in Him with all our hearts; as I have often said, that trust and faith of the heart alone make both God and Idol. If the faith and trust are right, then thy God is also the right God, and, again, if thy trust is false and wrong, then thou hast not the right God. For the two, faith and God, hold close together.[1]

(2) But we have to put our desires into words before God can satisfy them. "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." What then? Why should we ask Him? Because the asking will clear our thoughts about our desires. It will be a very good test of them. There are many things that we all wish, which we should not much like to put into our prayers, not because of any foolish notion that they are too small to find a place there, but because of an uncomfortable suspicion that perhaps they are not the kind of things that we ought to wish. And if we cannot make the desire into a cry, the sooner we make it dead as well as dumb the better for ourselves. The cry will serve, too, as a stimulus to the wishes which are put into words. Silent prayer is well, but there is a wonderful power on ourselves —it may be due to our weakness, but still it exists—in the articulate and audible utterance of our petitions to God.

¶ The sweetest and the best talent that God gives to any man or woman in this world is the talent of prayer. And the best usury that any man or woman brings back to God when He comes to reckon with them at the end of this world is a life of prayer.

[1] Luther, *The Greater Catechism.*

And those servants best put their Lord's money to the exchangers who rise early and sit late, as long as they are in this world, ever finding out and ever following after better and better methods of prayer, and ever forming more secret, more steadfast, and more spiritually fruitful habits of prayer: till they literally pray without ceasing, and till they continually strike out into new enterprises in prayer, and new achievements, and new enrichments. It was this that first drew me to Teresa. It was her singular originality in prayer and her complete captivity to prayer. It was the time she spent in prayer, and the refuge, and the peace, and the sanctification and the power for carrying on hard and unrequited work that she all her life found in prayer. It was her fidelity and her utter surrender of herself to this first and last of all her religious duties, till it became more a delight, and, indeed, more an indulgence, than a duty. With Teresa it was prayer first, and prayer last, and prayer always. With Teresa literally all things were sanctified, and sweetened, and made fruitful by prayer.[1]

(3) When we are ready, then, to receive God's satisfying bounty we will bring all our desires before His throne, and their fulfilment will surely come to pass. All that our heart has ever craved of the beautiful and good, but which we have never had; all we have ever longed for and have never reached; all that has been taken from us that was dear and precious to our souls and to the loss of which we have never become reconciled; all we have ever wanted without being able to win, though we have tried hard and earnestly so to do; all we have ever won and been unable to keep, or have kept only to find that the joy we expected in it has never been ours—in all these we have been seeking something which is waiting for us in the hands of God, and He will not fail to give it us when we are ready to receive it.

And the amazing thing is that God more than satisfies our desires. His bounty is so great that many are unwilling to take His greatest gifts. For He has given His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, and how many refuse Him! How foolish it is to take God's lesser gifts and refuse the greatest of all! The man in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* gathering the straws with the muck-rake and neglecting the crown above his head is a fit picture of such un-wisdom. Let us not follow his miserable example, but rather, while we receive with thankfulness all the good that God

[1] A. Whyte, *Santa Teresa*, 18.

gives us for the body, accept with equal readiness the Gift He has provided for the soul.

¶ Work we may, seek and strive, and we are all bidden do this; but in the end it is not our doing. It is not the need we feel of Christ which saves us. It is *Christ*, and He is a gift. If He did not place Himself before us, we could never see Him. He puts Himself in our hands. Unless we can grasp Him there, we shall never grasp Him anywhere. He lies, like treasure, at our feet; if we do not find Him there, we shall never find Him anywhere. He lies, like the pearl, under our eyes: if we do not see Him there, we shall never see Him anywhere.[1]

[1] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 99.

# Tenderness and Power.

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## Tenderness and Power.

**He healeth the broken in heart,**
**And bindeth up their wounds.**
**He telleth the number of the stars;**
**He giveth them all their names.—Ps. cxlvii. 3, 4.**

The old Hebrew Psalmist, by placing in striking contrast the infinitely great and the infinitely little, brings out, in the most effective way possible, the providence of God as at once comprehensive enough to superintend the interests of the collective universe, and kindly and careful enough not to neglect the smallest individual. While His omniscient eye numbers the innumerable stars, His gentle touch heals the broken heart. While His spoken word holds the glistening planets to their spheres, His tender hand binds up our bleeding wounds. These are old, very old thoughts, the imaginings of ancient Hebrew men, who little dreamed of the strange secrets hidden in the earth beneath their feet, or in the heaven above their heads; but, though between their day and ours lie centuries crowded with the most splendid discoveries man has made, yet neither science nor philosophy has ever proclaimed a truth that can match in sublimity, equal in beauty, or rival in its wealth of eternal human interest, this old Hebrew faith—"He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He telleth the number of the stars; he giveth them all their names."

### I.

### Broken Hearts and Countless Stars.

1. The Psalmist brings together here countless stars and broken hearts. It is not easy for us to get these two thoughts into our minds at the same time. Still harder is it for us to think them as one thought. It seems such a far cry from all the

stars of heaven to one poor bleeding heart, from those myriad points of fire to a few human tears. We see the sweep of the stars, and we walk in the shadow of pain; but in the bitter things we suffer, how little use we make of the great things we see! One idea excludes another that really belongs to it. We have not a large enough mental grasp. We look up at the stars and we forget our little world; we look out upon our little world and we forget the stars. We lose the years in the thought of the hour, and the hour in the thought of the ages. We seem unable to hold on to a great thought when we are in one of life's narrow places; yet it is just in that narrow place that the great thought can do most for us. We live by hours, and so we count by hours. We are pilgrims, so our standard of measurement is a step. In our fragmentary thinking we draw dividing lines across the undivided, and fail to see that the limited and the illimitable are not two things but one. But the Psalmist brought stars and broken hearts together.

¶ I think I am not far wrong in saying that, whatever science or revelation may have to tell us about God's relation to the sun and to the stars, there are many points in men's and women's lives when such things lose all their interest in the presence of personal anxieties that will take no denial. There are moments —we all, or most of us, know them too well—when even one slight physical pain obtrudes itself upon our attention and succeeds in spoiling our work, as a grain of sand might stop some delicate machine, or a little rift spoil the music of a lute. How much more, then, when the frame of a strong man is bowed down with utter and uncontrollable grief, or the woman's heart stands still at news of loss that so long as sun shall roll or stars give forth their shining shall never, never be forgotten! The heart does not measure things by algebra, or weigh such things in the balance of a cool and reasonable computation. The affections live, as it were, outside of time, and dwell in eternity alone with God. You may tell me, therefore, the number of the stars; but under bereavement I am not comforted. You may catalogue them all by their names; but my bitter pain refuses to be assuaged thereby, my broken heart refuses to be interested.[1]

2. But the Psalmist brings stars and broken hearts together, because to him heart-break is not to be regarded as a rare and

[1] Canon Curteis.

tragic episode in the human story. This world knows sorrow only as an incident. It is, for it, a cloud upon the sun, sometimes darkening all the after day. It is a voice of weeping or a choked silence in the shadow dusk of the river's edge. But, the last true sorrow of life is not on this wise. It is not dealt out to one here and another there as a bitter judgment or a wholesome discipline. It is inwoven into life. To miss it is to miss life. It is the price of the best. It is the law of the highest. When, after what we sometimes call the long farewell, you have seen a sorrow-stricken man bearing a bleeding heart out to the verge of the world, beyond the last outpost of earthly sympathy and beyond the kindly kingdom of human help, you have seen something for which earth has no healing, but you have not learned anything approaching the whole truth concerning heart-break. There is the broken and the contrite heart, the heart that is seeking sainthood, and fainting and falling and aching in the quest. There is the broken and the yearning heart, that strains and throbs with lofty longings and the burden of the valley of vision. And to find healing for such sorrow a man must find God. And He must be the God who counts the stars.

¶ Perhaps no man ever stood in the presence of a great trouble without being driven by his own deepest instincts to seek strength and comfort from a Being mightier than himself. Many a hitherto godless mariner, battling with the wild waves, has called with simple and fervid faith on the God whose name the child had loved to reverence before the man had learned to profane. Many a poor burdened woman, whose heart was well-nigh breaking in the presence of a sorrow she could not bear alone, has grown calm and strong as her agony rose into a great cry after God. Instincts like these, characteristic of man the wide world over, tell that the Creator has planted within the human spirit the faculty to which, when danger from within or without threatens, the faith is native that He who healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds, also delighteth to hear and answer the prayer of His afflicted creatures.[1]

¶ An astronomer, known to me, divides his heart between the stars and his home—in the latter a dying boy; both know that the God of the stars has knit their hearts together and binds them up. The spiritual man is apt to come among scientists as into an ice-house, the scientist into church as into a tropical

[1] A. M. Fairbairn, *Christ in the Centuries*, 209.

house. The recognition of God's presence and work in both is necessary to worthy thought of Him.[1]

3. Broken hearts appeal to God in a way that the most brilliant stars cannot do. The planets whirl through space, but do not know it. They are safe but blind, deaf, inert masses. They respond to the will of their Creator, but they are not conscious of a Father's love. Amid those vast glories our Father can find no room for His pity, no response to His love, nothing that He can bend over to heal and to bless. The stars are not the true sphere of God, but the heart. The heart is the sphere of His love, the realm of His pity. What God does is seen among the stars, but what God is, that only the broken heart can know.

¶ From a purely speculative and intellectual point of view, I defy any man to preach a gospel of comfort from the text, "He telleth the number of the stars." Many a man has felt his helplessness and his loneliness beneath the stars. He has said, God is immeasurably remote from my little life down here among the shadows. Is it likely that amid the vast and intricate calculations of the universe He will take account of an insignificant fraction like my life? How should He think upon me when He has all the stars to count? How should He miss me from the fold when He is shepherding all the heavenly hosts? Thus for some the greatness of God has been made to spell the loneliness of man. That is the shivering logic of an intellectual conception of the Deity. The Psalmist who spoke of star-counting and heart-healing in the same breath had got beyond that. The deep, persistent needs of his life had brought him there. It was not by a mere chance that he chose to speak of heart-break when he sought to link earth with heaven and to lift the fretful mind of man up to the thought of God's eternal presence and power. Heart-break is not an idea; it is an experience. Yes, and it is an experience that only the stars can explain and only Divinity can account for.[2]

¶ In Luke Fildes' well-known picture of "The Doctor," we see the physician in the cottage seated by the bedside of a sick child, watching with a tender and painful solicitude. All his experience, all his skill, and all his patience are concentrated upon that little child. His whole heart, mind, and soul are drawn out to it. God is more at home with the broken heart than with the stars.[3]

[1] Morlais Jones. [2] P. C. Ainsworth, *The Pilgrim Church*, 30.
[3] H. Ford, *Sermons with Analyses*, 63.

## II.

### HEART-HEALING AND STAR-COUNTING.

The singer of this song linked together the healing of man's broken heart with a profound and transcendent conception of God. There was a time when the preacher used to give out for his text, "Behold, the nations are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing." He preached the glory and the wisdom and the power of God until men saw the universe as but one ray of all that glory, one word of all that wisdom, one deed of all that power. And with that tremendous background he preached the effectual comfort of the everlasting Father. Some are getting afraid of that background. And we require to remind ourselves that the human heart needs it and demands it, and will never be truly satisfied with anything else. There is nothing else large enough for us to write upon it the meanings and the sanctions and the purposes of God's healing mercy. But to look at it from man's side, the gospel that is to bring availing and abiding comfort to a world like ours needs a tremendous background: it needs a transcendent sweep. If we have a doctrine of the Divine immanence that veils the stars, that seems to make the truth of God a more familiar and compassable thing, that silences the challenge of God's lonely sovereignty and His transcendent and mysterious glory, we have not the doctrine that will meet your deepest needs or win a response from the depths of other hearts. This shame-stricken, yearning world needs the glory of God as much as it needs His mercy.

¶ You know quite well that the greater the power, the more arresting does gentleness become. As might advances and energy increases, so always the more notable is gentleness. It is far more striking in a mailed warrior than in a mother with her woman's heart; far more impressive in the lord of armies than in some retired and ineffectual dreamer. The mightier the power a man commands, the more compelling is his trait of gentleness. If he be tyrant of a million subjects, a touch of tenderness is thrilling. And it is when we think of the infinite might of God, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, that we realize the

wonder of our text. It is He who calleth out the stars by number, and maketh the pillars of the heaven to shake. And when He worketh, no man can stay His hand or say to Him, What doest Thou? And it is this Ruler, infinite in power, before whom the princes of the earth are vanity, who is exquisitely and for ever gentle.[1]

1. "He telleth the number of the stars, he giveth them all their names." One would think that if He were busy building, and gathering together, and healing the broken in heart, and binding up their wounds, He would have no time to attend to the framework of the universe. Yet here is the distinct declaration that the universe is taken care of at every point. There is not one little wicket-gate that opens into the meadow of the stars that is not angel-guarded. God has no postern gates by which the thief can enter undiscovered. The word "telleth" is a singular word; what is it when reduced to the level of our mother tongue? "He telleth" is equal to "He numbereth"; He looketh night after night to see that every one is there.

¶ We have sometimes heard the shepherd muttering to himself as the sheep came home in the gloaming—one, two, three, four. Why this enumeration? Because he has so many, and he must know whether every one is at home or not. What does one matter in fifty? Everything. It is the missing one that makes the heart ache; it is the one thing wanting that reduces wealth to poverty; it is the one anxiety that drives our sleep away. I have a thousand blessings; on that recollection I will fall to slumber. Yet I cannot. Why not? Because of the one anxiety, the one pain, the one trouble, the one child lacking, the one friend grieved, the one life in danger, the one legitimate aspiration imperilled and threatened with disappointment. But I have a thousand blessings; why not pillow my head upon these and rest? I cannot: nature is against me; reason may have a long argument, but the one anxiety arises and sneers it down. So the Lord telleth, counteth, goeth over the number, as it were one by one, to see that every little light is kindled, every asteroid at home. The very hairs of your head are all numbered. He makes pets of the stars—He calls them by their names. He treats them as if they were intelligent; He speaks to them as if they could answer Him.[2]

[1] G. H. Morrison, *The Weaving of Glory*, 181.
[2] J. Parker, *Studies in Texts*, vi. 84.

2. The God of the multitude is also the God of the individual soul. He attends to the innumerable host and to the single unit. Where we hear but a distant murmuring He hears the separate beating of every heart. This is one great distinction between natural and revealed religion, for the one thing that natural religion cannot do is to assure us of the individual care of God. The god of natural religion is like the driver of some eastern caravan; and he drives his caravan with skill unerring over the desert to the gleaming city. But he never halts for any bruised mortal, or waits to minister to any dying woman, or even for a moment checks his team to ease the agonies of any child. That is the god of natural religion—the mighty tendency that makes for righteousness. Imperially careful of the whole, he is sovereignly careless of the one. And over against that god, so dark and terrible, there stands for ever the God of revelation, saying in infinite and individual mercy, "I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." He, too, is making for a city which hath foundations, and whose streets are golden. But He has an ear for every feeble cry, a great compassion for every bruised heart, and a watchful pity, like a mother's pity, for lips that are craving for a little water. It was a great thought which St. Peter uttered when he said to all who read, "He careth for you." But St. Paul was nearer the heart of the Eternal when he said, "He loved me, and gave himself for me."

This thought of God is countersigned in the clearest way by Christ. The God of Christ, in communistic ages, is the asylum of individuality. It is true that there was something in a crowd that stirred our Saviour to His depths. He was moved with compassion when He saw the multitude, as a flock of sheep without a shepherd. And when He came over against the city of Jerusalem, where the murmur of life was, and where the streets were thronged, looking, He was intensely moved, and wept. There was a place for the all within that heart of His. He "saw life steadily, and saw it whole." There was not a problem of these teeming multitudes but had its last solution in His blood. Yet He who thus encompassed the totality in a love that was majestic to redeem, had a heart that never for an instant faltered in its passionate devotion to the one. Living for mankind, He spoke His deepest when His whole audience was one listener. Dying

for mankind, His heart was thrilled with the agonized entreaty of one thief. For one coin the woman swept the house; for one sheep the shepherd faced the midnight; for one son, and him a sorry prodigal, the father in the home was broken-hearted. That is complete assurance that our God is the God of individuals. "Thou art as much His care, as if beside, nor man nor angel moved in heaven or earth." He is Almighty, and takes the whole wide universe into the covering hollow of His hand, yet He is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob.

3. The God who counts the stars is the only sufficient healer of broken hearts. Only He, in virtue of His Deity, can read the secret sorrows of the heart, to whom "all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid." This is the prerogative of God, and of God alone. And none but He, in virtue of His Humanity, can lay His hand upon the broken heart to mollify and heal its wounds. How often there are deep down in the heart feelings too sad and too sacred for utterance to mortal ears, when we crave for a higher sympathy than that which man can give, and the soul finds relief only in reaching out in prayer to God. And there is no limit to God's sympathy. It is bound only by the horizon of human need and human suffering. The heart broken with contrition for sin, the heart bruised with the sorrows of life, the heart bleeding with the anguish of bereavement—these all find a response in the heart of God, for this is the sphere of His pity, of His compassion, and of His love. There is no human sorrow but appeals to Him.

¶ Think you He cannot sympathize with our worst sorrows, who shielded from scorn the broken-hearted who could only smite upon his breast; who stood like a God between their victim and the hell-hounds who were baying for their prey, till they cowered at His feet and slunk away; who could forgive a coward, and select the alien and heretic as a type of the neighbour who is to be loved; who was peculiarly sensitive to the charm of woman's society and its soothing gentleness; who wept for temporary grief; who was considerate for the tired disciples and the hungry multitude; whose chosen home was the house of the publican and sinner; who bore contempt with majestic dignity—is that a trifle?—who felt keenly, as His own touching words witness, the pain of homelessness? Oh, can you say that He

could not enter into our worst sorrows, or that His trials were in "show"? Comprehend that heart, containing all that was manliest and all that was most womanly. Think what you will, but do not mistake Him, or else you will lose the one great certainty to which, in the midst of the darkest doubt, I never ceased to cling—the entire symmetry and loveliness, and the unequalled nobleness of the humanity of the Son of Man.[1]

4. What is this wonderful ligament with which Christ binds the wounds of the once broken heart? It is the sympathy with another's pain; it is the remembrance that I suffer not alone. The sympathy with my brother restrains my personal outflow. It takes away the egotism of my grief. I no longer feel that a strange thing has befallen me. I no longer resent the raincloud as a special wrong. I feel that it is not special—that it is universal. It is the thought of this that stops the outward bleeding of my heart. It makes me refuse to show my wound. It forbids me to cry out in the streets as if I were a solitary sufferer. It says, "Think what your brother must feel; he has the same pains as you!" It bids me count the burdens of the passers-by; and, as I count, I forget to remember my own.

¶ The actual conditions of our life being as they are, and the capacity for suffering so large a principle in things, and the only principle always safe, a sympathy with the pain one actually sees, it follows that the constituent practical difference between men will be their capacity for a trained insight into those conditions, their capacity for sympathy; and the future with those who have most of it. And for the present, those who have much of it have (I tell myself) something to hold by, even in the dissolution of a world, or in that dissolution of self, which is for everyone no less than the dissolution of the world it represents for him. Nearly all of us, I suppose, have had our moments in which any effective sympathy for us has seemed impossible, and our pain in life a mere stupid outrage upon us, like some overwhelming physical violence; and we could seek refuge from it at best, only in a mere general sense of goodwill, somewhere perhaps. And then, to one's surprise, the discovery of that goodwill, if it were only in a not unfriendly animal, may seem to have explained, and actually justified, the existence of our pain at all.

There have been occasions when I have felt that if others

[1] *Life and Letters of the Rev. F. W. Robertson*, 233.

cared for me as I did for them, it would be not so much a solace of loss as an equivalent for it—a certain real thing in itself—a touching of that absolute ground among all the changes of phenomena, such as our philosophers of late have professed themselves quite unable to find. In the mere clinging of human creatures to each other, nay! in one's own solitary self-pity, even amidst what might seem absolute loss, I seem to touch the eternal.[1]

[1] Walter Pater.

# The Beginning of Wisdom.

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## The Beginning of Wisdom.

**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.—Prov. i. 7.**

This proposition is by some commentators regarded as the motto, symbol, or device of the Book of Proverbs. Others regard it as forming part of the superscription. As a general proposition expressing the essence of the philosophy of the Israelites, and from its relation to the rest of the contents of this book, it rightly occupies a special and individual position. The proposition occurs again in Prov. ix. 10, and it is met with in similar or slightly modified forms in other books of the Wisdom literature. The Arabs have adopted it at the head of their proverbial collections.

### I.

### The Importance of Wisdom.

1. Knowledge, that is, true knowledge or wisdom, is the supremely important thing. "Wisdom" was the key-word of the East in general, as well as of the Greek philosophic systems of thought. In the different cases the force of the term and the content assigned to it were different, yet, in spite of the differences, the term marks a common ground on which all meet, and reveals the essential unity of human thought and aspiration. "Wisdom" may be differently conceived, but there is agreement on this, that there is a great world-secret which to know is to find life, that there is a sphinx riddle, which we must answer or die. In the general Oriental idea of "Wisdom" there was much superstition. The wise man was he who could read the secret of the world, and unfold for men's guidance the roll of destiny. This sometimes took the form of such superstitions as that of astrology; yet there was a manifest effort to propound the right questions concerning human life, and to find the right answer. The result seems, from

our point of view, to be meagre and inadequate enough, but there must have been a truth for them at the heart of it.

¶ Prior to its contact with Hellenism, the Semitic mind had proceeded no farther in the path of Philosophy than the propounding of enigmas, and the utterance of aphoristic wisdom. Detached observations of Nature, but especially of the life and fate of Man, form the basis of such thinking; and where comprehension ceases, resignation to the almighty and inscrutable will of God comes in without difficulty. By the side of this wisdom there was found everywhere the Magic of the sorcerer,—a knowledge which was authenticated by command over outward things. But it was only in the priestly circles of ancient Babylonia that men rose to a more scientific consideration of the world. Their eyes were turned from the confusion of earthly existence to the order of the heavens. They resembled rather the Greeks who came to understand the Many and Manifold in their sublunary forms only after they had discovered the harmony of the All in the unity and steadiness of the movement of the heavens. This Chaldæan wisdom, from the time of Alexander the Great, became pervaded, in Babylonia and Syria, with Hellenistic and later with Hellenistic-Christian ideas, or else was supplanted by them. Of more importance than any Semitic tradition was the contribution made by Persian and Indian wisdom. India was regarded as the true land of wisdom. In Arab writers we often come upon the view that there the birthplace of philosophy is to be found. By peaceful trading, in which the agents between India and the West were principally Persians, and next as a result of the Muslim conquest, acquaintance with Indian wisdom spread far and wide. Many a deliverance of ethical and political wisdom, in the dress of proverbs, was taken over from the fables and tales of India. The investigations of the Indians, associated with their sacred books and wholly determined by a religious purpose, have certainly had a lasting influence upon Persian Sufism and Islamic Mysticism. But the Greek mind was needed to direct the reflective process to the knowledge of the Real. In Indian philosophy knowledge in the main continued to be only a means. Deliverance from the evil of existence was the aim, and philosophy a pathway to the life of blessedness. Hence the monotony of this wisdom,—concentrated, as it was, upon the essence of all things in its Oneness,—as contrasted with the many-branched science of the Hellenes, which strove to comprehend the operations of Nature and Mind on all sides.[1]

[1] T. J. De Boer, *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, 6.

2. The Greek idea of "Wisdom" was a grander thing; it meant a clear insight into the eternal order of the world. In more modern terms, it meant the knowledge of God. But it had its defects. The God that was sought after was too much of an intellectual Infinite, and too exclusively apprehended by the intellect. Hence the dictum that the highest wisdom was a kind of intellectual contemplation in which the mind transcended appearances and looked right into the heart and the reality of things. Even by the Greek this wisdom was held with a strong element of ethical apprehension and feeling. The ethical factors were presupposed even when not expressly stated, for the Greeks declared that knowledge was virtue, and it is clear that the knowledge which is virtue is ethical at the heart of it. But the intellectual and metaphysical predominated too much in the Greek system; the transcendence and sovereignty of the ethical element was not made clear and emphatic, and Greek wisdom at last degenerated into a jingle of syllogisms. Yet the Greek had seen much of the truth of the world, and many of the sons of Greece lived strong and heroic lives through the wisdom that God had revealed to them. When their old truths were ready to vanish away, God was already preparing to send them the higher wisdom, the wisdom revealed in Christ.

¶ Wisdom, the third of Plato's cardinal virtues, consists in the supremacy of reason over spirit and appetite; just as temperance and courage consisted in the subordination of appetite and spirit to reason. Wisdom, then, is much the same thing as temperance and courage, only in more positive and comprehensive form. Wisdom is the vision of the good, the true end of man, for the sake of which the lower elements must be subordinated.[1]

¶ On the broad distinction between the morally good life, manifesting itself in such "virtues" as self-mastery and liberality, and the life of intellectual insight as typified in the wise administration of one's own and other people's affairs, Aristotle shows no tendency to suppose that a man can be good in the full sense without being intelligent and thoughtful. The life of prudence he consistently conceives of (as we should expect from his general view of the relation of higher forms of reality to lower) as the end to which the life of conformity to moral and social traditions points, and in which it finds its reality. According to this view,

[1] W. D. Hyde, *The Five Great Philosophies of Life*, 129.

to be good is to be on the road to wisdom; to be wise is to know where goodness points and what it means. Aristotle endeavoured to hold the balance between the citizen and the philosopher, first, by representing the life of good citizenship as a means to the life of leisure or philosophy, and, second, by identifying the latter with that highest form of intellectual activity which is the end and the soul of civilization. Wisdom, as conceived by Aristotle, presents two features which are the marks of truth. In the first place, it is activity, and activity of the highest element in man. To possess this wisdom is thus to heighten, instead of to depress, the sense of living. Secondly, it is a deepening of the present, and not merely the preparation for a future life. It is true that Aristotle speaks of it as a putting off of our mortality, but the immortality which he has in view consists not in an other-world life foreign to the present, but in the power of seeing the eternal principles or laws of which our own world is the expression.[1]

3. The Hebrew, though we cannot compare him in intellectual might with the great Greek athletes, found a nobler and truer and more abiding conception of "Wisdom." While the Greek conception contained much that was noble and true, and was to that extent a preparation for the coming of Christ, especially preparing the intellectual elements and methods for the apprehension of the teaching of the Son, yet it was of the Hebrew conception that the Wisdom revealed in Christ was a direct development. The standpoint is the same in the Old and in the New Testament, and the Hebrew presentation of the relation of "Wisdom" both to God and to man contains some striking suggestions which become almost startling in the light of the New Testament revelation of Jesus Christ. The primary and fundamental idea in Hebrew "Wisdom" is ethical. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The Hebrew does not argue the matter; he does not prove it by a series of syllogisms. He knows it to be so. He is self-consciously ethical. God's voice within him speaks to his spirit, his God-filled life presents him with a clear message, and that message he proclaims to the world. The question he propounds to himself is not, Whence came the world? but, What is the true path for me to pursue? What is the utterance within me which I recognize to be noblest and divinest? What is the course of life, the manner of exist-

[1] J. H. Muirhead, *Chapters from Aristotle's Ethics*, 162.

ence, in which I shall be true to the best within me, and find peace and satisfaction for my life? The great merit of the Hebrew lies in this, that he, of all the old nations of the world, gave the truest answer to these questions, that he became the oracle of God in the shrine of human life, and that, while systems of thought have changed and been superseded, the message he gave the world of the will of God as the ethical Sovereign of the world remains in its integrity, his ethical standpoint has been confirmed by the development of the world, and the "Wisdom" he proclaimed stands for ever as the highest wisdom, the true guide of human life, and the true explanation of God's world.

¶ When we speak of Hebrew wisdom we must not think of it as concerned with the problems of metaphysics which absorb the attention of Western philosophers. It was concrete not abstract, practical not speculative. Its task was not to win an ordered and harmonious conception of the universe, but to teach men how they might direct their way aright. Even where it busied itself with problems, it was a practical interest which supplied the impulse. We have no reason to doubt that from the earliest times there were those who reflected on life and conduct, and embodied their observations in picturesque parable or terse aphorism. Many of the maxims in the Book of Proverbs may well be quite ancient, and not a few may have come from Solomon himself. The main body of the book consists of maxims for the right conduct of life, written from the standpoint of the virtuous middle classes, and with a firm belief that morality and prosperity went hand in hand. The shrewd worldly wisdom, the prudential note, the value placed on success, perhaps bulk too largely in the common estimate of the book, and do injustice to its finer, nobler, and more generous qualities. And even the lower element has its place in any sober judgment of life. Society needs it for a stable basis, the commercial world has much to learn from the insistence on integrity, while many of the children of light would be all the better for some of that wisdom in which they are notoriously deficient.[1]

## II.

### The Beginning of Wisdom.

1. The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God. That is to say, the gates of Knowledge and Wisdom are opened only to the

[1] A. S. Peake, *The Religion of Israel*, 145.

knock of Reverence. Without reverence, it is true, men may gain what is called worldly knowledge and worldly wisdom; but these are far removed from truth, and experience often shows us how profoundly ignorant and how incurably blind pushing and successful people are, whose knowledge is all turned to delusion, and whose wisdom shifts round into folly. The seeker after real knowledge will have little about him which suggests worldly success. He is modest, self-forgetful, possibly shy; he is absorbed in a disinterested pursuit, for he has seen afar the high, white star of truth; at it he gazes, to it he aspires. Things which only affect him personally make but little impression on him; things which affect the truth move, agitate, excite him. A bright spot is on ahead, beckoning to him. The colour mounts to his cheek, the nerves thrill, and his soul is filled with rapture, when the form seems to grow clearer and a step is gained in the pursuit. When a discovery is made he almost forgets that he is the discoverer; he will even allow the credit of it to pass to another, for he would rather rejoice in the truth itself than allow his joy to be tinged with a personal consideration. Yes, this modest, self-forgetful, reverent mien is the first condition of winning Truth, which must be approached on bended knee, and recognized with a humble and a prostrate heart. There is no gainsaying the fact that this fear, this reverence, is the beginning of wisdom.

¶ The greatest men of science in our own as in all other ages are distinguished by a singular simplicity, and by a reverence which communicates itself to their readers. What could be more reverent than Darwin's way of studying the coral-insect or the earth-worm? He bestowed on these humble creatures of the ocean and of the earth the most patient and loving observation. And his success in understanding and explaining them was in proportion to the respect which he showed to them. The coral-diver has no reverence for the insect; he is bent only on gain, and he consequently can tell us nothing of the coral reef and its growth. The gardener has no reverence for the worm; he cuts it ruthlessly with his spade, and flings it carelessly aside; accordingly he is not able to tell us of its lowly ministries and of the part it plays in the fertilization of the soil. It was Darwin's reverence which proved to be the beginning of knowledge in these departments of investigation; and if it was only the reverence of the naturalist, the truth is illustrated all the better, for his knowledge of the unseen and the eternal dwindled away,

just as his perception of beauty in literature and art declined, in proportion as he suffered his spirit of reverence towards these things to die.[1]

2. The deepest reverence arises from the recognition of God. If this universe of which we form a part is a thought of the Divine mind, a work of the Divine hand, a scene of Divine operations, in which God is realizing, by slow degrees, a vast spiritual purpose, it is evident that no attempt to understand it can be successful which leaves this, its fundamental idea, out of account; as well might one attempt to understand a picture while refusing to recognize that the artist had any purpose to express in painting it, or indeed that there was any artist at all. So much every one will admit. But if the universe is not the work of a Divine mind, or the effect of a Divine will; if it is merely the working of a blind, irrational force, which realizes no end, because it has no end to realize; if we, the feeble outcome of a long, unthinking evolution, are the first creatures that ever *thought*, and the only creatures who now *think*, in all the universe of Being; it follows that of a universe so irrational there can be no true knowledge for rational beings, and of a scheme of things so unwise there can be no philosophy or wisdom. No person who reflects can fail to recognize this, and this is the truth which is asserted in the text. It is not necessary to maintain that without admitting God we cannot have knowledge of a certain number of empirical facts; but that does not constitute a philosophy or a wisdom. It is necessary to maintain that without admitting God we cannot have any explanation of our knowledge, or any verification of it; without admitting God our knowledge can never come to any roundness or completeness such as might justify us in calling it by the name of Wisdom.

¶ True Wisdom must account for the worlds that sweep in space, and even for the lily of the field and the sparrow on the housetop. True Wisdom is ultimately a philosophy of things, though it may be much more than this. We know that the New Testament makes Jesus Christ, as rightly apprehended, the explanation of the creation of the world, and of all the eternal activities of God, though the starting-point of this position is an ethical relation, and not a system of thought. This position is

[1] R. F. Horton, *The Book of Proverbs*, 16.

already obscurely anticipated in the Hebrew idea of Wisdom, on which is made to rest the whole superstructure of the universe.[1]

3. If true wisdom is to be ours, the God that we acknowledge must be no mere idea or abstraction, but Jehovah, the God of revelation. It may be taken for granted that, so far as the intellect alone claims satisfaction, it is enough to posit the bare idea of God as the condition of all rational existence. But when men come to recognize themselves as spiritual beings, with conceptions of right and wrong, with strong affections, with soaring aspirations, with ideas which lay hold of Eternity, they find themselves quite incapable of being satisfied with the bare idea of God; the soul within them pants and thirsts for a *living* God. An intellectual love of God might satisfy purely intellectual creatures; but to meet the needs of man as he is, God must be a God that manifests His own personality, and does not leave Himself without a witness to His rational creatures. A wisdom, then, that is truly to appraise and rightly to guide the life of man, must start with the recognition of a God whose peculiar designation is the Self-existent One, and who makes Himself known to man by that name; that is, it must start with the "fear of *the Lord.*"

(1) In building the temple of knowledge, this fear of the Lord must be the foundation-stone. Knowledge being the apprehension of facts, and the application of them to life, cannot properly begin, or be based on a right foundation, without first apprehending and applying a fact which includes and which modifies all other facts whatever. The world has lived long enough to know that there is no such thing practically as getting at the knowledge of God through His works and ways—through the phenomena of nature, or the unfoldings of providence, or the operations of the human intellect. God is that which He has declared Himself to be; that which His Spirit has in and by man's spirit testified that He is. And this revelation of Himself standing recorded for all the world, it is mere idleness to suppose that we can by searching find Him out, or can place that great fact last, as an object of research and conclusion, which He has blazoned forth for us on the face of His written word. This then

[1] J. Thomas.

must come *first*, unless we should have all our knowledge crippled and distorted.

¶ A very clever man, a Bampton Lecturer, evidently writing with good and upright intention, sends me a Lecture in which he lays down the qualities he thinks necessary to make theological study fruitful. They are courage, patience, and sympathy. He omits one quality, in my opinion even more important than any of these, and that is reverence: without a great stock of reverence, mankind, as I believe, will go to the bad. I might add another omission: it is caution—a thing different from reverence, but an apt handmaid to it, and the proper counterpoise to the courage of which certainly there seems to be no lack.[1]

(2) The fear of the Lord lies at the foundation of knowledge because knowledge, understood as the mere accumulation of facts, is inoperative upon life. The way from the head to the heart is stopped by a hard rock, which must be softened and cut through before a constant and reliable communication can be established. And in order to this, which is of first and paramount importance, if knowledge is to be of any real use to help and renovate man, the affections must be wrought upon at the very outset of teaching; the information imparted must stir fear and hope and love in the breast; and these must break up the stony way, and get diffused over the torpid heart, and stir it into action for good. But what fact will you disclose, what knowledge impart, which shall stir these affections? Fear and hope and love are inseparably connected in man with personal agency. Unless such agency intervene, *i.e.*, if the object of these feelings be only a material one, fear becomes mere terror, hope mere expectation, love mere profession. And what personal agency will you bring in at the beginning of knowledge, which shall supply, and continue to supply, the exercise of these affections, so as to guarantee through life that knowledge shall not be barren or unprofitable? God has wisely placed about our infancy personal agencies exciting all these affections. He has continued around us through the greater part of life personal agencies on which fear and love and hope more or less depend. But all these pass away from us, and we from them. There is but one personal agent, whose influence and presence can abide through life, can alike excite fear and

[1] *Letters on Church and Religion of W. E. Gladstone*, ii. 327.

hope and love in the infant, in the child, in the youth, in the man, in the aged, and on the bed of death; and that one is God Himself. And unless He be known first, and known throughout, knowledge will abide alone in the head, and will not find a way to the heart; man will know, but will not grow by it; will know, but will not act upon it; will know for narrow, low, selfish purposes, but never for blessing to himself or to others; never for the great ends of his being—never for glory to his God. The fear of the Lord is not a barren fact, like the shape of the earth or the course of the seasons; it is a living, springing, transmuting affection, capable of enduing even ordinary facts with power to cheer and bless, and to bear fruit in men's hearts and lives.

¶ Exactly in the degree in which you can find creatures greater than yourself, to look up to, in that degree you are ennobled yourself, and, in that degree, happy. If you could live always in the presence of archangels, you would be happier than in that of men; but even if only in the company of admirable knights and beautiful ladies, the more noble and bright they were, and the more you could reverence their virtue, the happier you would be. On the contrary, if you were condemned to live among a multitude of idiots, dumb, distorted, and malicious, you would not be happy in the constant sense of your own superiority. Thus all real joy and power of progress in humanity depend on finding something to reverence, and all the baseness and misery of humanity begin in a habit of disdain. Now, by general misgovernment, I repeat, we have created in Europe a vast populace, and out of Europe a still vaster one, which has lost even the power and conception of reverence;—which exists only in the worship of itself—which can neither see anything beautiful around it, nor conceive anything virtuous above it; which has, towards all goodness and greatness, no other feelings than those of the lowest creatures—fear, hatred, or hunger; a populace which has sunk below your appeal in their nature, as it has risen beyond your power in their multitude;—whom you can now no more charm than you can the adder, nor discipline, than you can the summer fly.[1]

(3) In New Testament times "the fear of God" has blossomed into "the love of God." The characteristic Old Testament designation of religion as "the fear of Jehovah" corresponds to the Old Testament revelation of Him as the Holy One—that is,

[1] Ruskin, *Crown of Wild Olive*, § 137.

as Him who is infinitely separated from human existence and limitations. Therefore is He "to be had in reverence of all" who would be about Him—that fear or reverential awe in which no slavish dread mingles, and which is perfectly consistent with aspiration, trust, and love. The Old Testament reveals Him as separate from men; the New Testament reveals Him as united to men in the Divine Man, Christ Jesus. Therefore its keynote is the designation of religion as "the love of God"; but that name is no contradiction of the earlier, but the completion of it.

¶ It hardly entered into the mind of a Hebrew thinker to conceive that "fear of the Lord" might pass into full, whole-hearted, and perfect love. And yet it may be shown that this was the change effected when Christ was of God "made unto us Wisdom"; it is not that the "fear," or reverence, become less; it is that the fear is swallowed up in the larger and more gracious sentiment. For us who have received Christ as our Wisdom, it has become almost a truism that we must love in order to know. We recognize that the causes of things remain hidden from us until our hearts have been kindled into an ardent love towards the First Cause, God Himself; we find that even our processes of reasoning are faulty until they are touched with the Divine tenderness, and rendered sympathetic by the infusion of a loftier passion. And it is quite in accordance with this fuller truth that both science and philosophy have made genuine progress only in Christian lands and under Christian influences. Where the touch of Christ's hand has been most decisively felt, in Germany, in England, in America, and where consequently Wisdom has attained a nobler, a richer, a more tender significance, there, under fostering powers, which are not the less real because they are not always acknowledged, the great discoveries have been made, the great systems of thought have been framed, and the great counsels of conduct have gradually assumed substance and authority. And from a wide observation of facts we are able to say, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge"; yes, but the wisdom of God has led us on from fear to love, and in the love of the Lord is found the fulfilment of that which trembled into birth through fear.[1]

> One in a vision saw a woman fair;
> In her left hand a water jar she bare,
> And in her right a burning torch she held
> That shed around a fierce and ruddy glare.

[1] R. F. Horton.

Sternly she said, "With fire I will burn down
The halls of Heaven; with water I will drown
  The fires of Hell,—that all men may be good
From love, not fear, nor hope of starry crown.

The fear of punishment, the lust of pay,
With Heaven and Hell shall also pass away,
  And righteousness alone shall fill each heart
With the glad splendour of its shining ray."

Such is the Hindoo legend quaintly told
In Bernard Picart's famous folio old;
  And 'neath this symbol ethnical, we may
A moral for the present time behold.

When fear of punishment and greed of pay
Shall faint and die in Love's serener day,
  Then shall the Kingdom of the Lord arrive
And earth become the Heaven for which we pray.[1]

[1] W. E. A. Axon.

# Trust in the Lord.

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## TRUST IN THE LORD.

**Trust in the Lord with all thine heart,**
**And lean not upon thine own understanding:**
**In all thy ways acknowledge him,**
**And he shall direct thy paths.—Prov. iii. 5, 6.**

THERE are two ways in which people pass through life. They pass through it remembering God, or they pass through it forgetting Him. They go through it with Him in their minds, though they cannot see Him; or they go through it as if they had nothing to do with Him. They live as if this world were all they had to think about, or they remember that another life is coming, though they know they have to die in this world. And, of course, in what they do, this great difference shows itself. If people have not God and eternity in their thoughts, how is it possible that they should do anything as if they had? How can they try to please God, whom they never think of? And how can they give themselves any trouble to be prepared for eternity, when eternity is nothing but a mere word and sound to them, meaning nothing? But if they really have the greatness and mercy and judgment of God continually in their minds, they must either be openly rebelling against the light, or else they cannot help shaping their lives by the awful truths they believe, and living as those who must soon pass away from here to meet the Judge and Saviour of the quick and the dead. Either they are wise in their own eyes—that is, they trust themselves and the present world for everything they wish and work for, and feel no want of God, nor care for what He promises—or they acknowledge Him in all their ways; they think of His eye, His will, His hand, to uphold or cast down, to guide or to chastise, in all that they undertake through their life. Either they "lean upon their own understanding"; they are satisfied with what they see and have learnt about the ways and wisdom and good things of this present

world, and will not listen even to God, when He tells them a different story about what men think so much of here; or they trust in the Lord with all their heart, knowing that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," and that it would profit a man nothing if he were to "gain the whole world, and lose his own soul."

## I.

### A Prohibition.

**"Lean not upon thine own understanding."**

1. These words presuppose the existence of sin, of actual disorder, of want of harmony between fallen man and the moral universe. Were it not so, they could have neither meaning nor propriety, and would certainly never have been written. To write the former part, "Trust in the Lord," would have been unnecessary; to write the latter, "Lean not upon thine own understanding," would have been improper. It is quite natural for a sinless being to lean upon his own understanding; it is indeed a positive virtue in him to do so; it is, in fact, but one form of trusting in God. For who gave us our understanding? Who endowed us in the beginning with the light of reason? Who conferred upon us those intellectual faculties which make us differ from the brute creation? "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." He gave us understanding for a purpose: that it might be our unfailing guide throughout the journey of life. To doubt the credibility of the understanding—the understanding unadulterated by sin—would therefore be a reflection upon God's wisdom and goodness. The understanding in man is analogous to instinct in inferior animals. In following instinct, the animal obeys God; for instinct is God's law implanted in its nature, and compliance with it is invariably attended with beneficial results. To man, however, in his present state—sinful, polluted, degraded as he is—no advice can be more appropriate than this: "Lean not upon thine own understanding."

¶ If I had to single out any particular verses in the Bible which I am conscious of having influenced me most it would be

those which were taught me when a boy and which I long afterwards saw on the wall in General Gordon's room in Southampton: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."[1]

¶ When the prophet Jeremiah expressed himself thus, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," he spoke words which we must all feel to be true, each one of his own self. Now, there is an uncertainty, a want of fixed purpose, a hesitation, a going backwards and forwards, an openness to any crafty temptation, an unsettled, infirm condition of mind, a wrong choice of objects, when a man "leans upon his own understanding," and is "wise in his own eyes." His steps are uncertain, his ways crooked, his principles shifting with the world in which, and for which, he lives: his whole course of action is measured out to him by the opinions of others as unsettled as himself: he is like a wave of the sea, tossed to and fro, at the mercy of every breath of ridicule and temptation that passes over him.[2]

2. Yet this prohibition must have its limits. To live in utter disregard of our understanding, to allow our mental powers to be atrophied through want of exercise, would lead to the most disastrous consequences. Such a life would be the life of an idiot or a madman—dreary, mean, and purposeless. Every step by which we impair our understanding is a step in the direction of idiocy and madness; every chance of cultivating our intellect we let slip is a lost opportunity of perfecting our manhood. True, human nature can no longer boast of the exquisite harmony, beauty, and perfection which belonged to it in its primeval state; still, it is glorious in its fall, it is grand in its ruin; there yet linger about its shattered powers traces of the Divine image which sin has so miserably effaced. Our supreme desire, then, should be salvation—the salvation of the body, of the soul, of the entire man—the restoration of our nature to its original wonderful greatness. That man is engaged in the noblest occupation who, being awakened to a sense of his own dignity through the regenerating influence of God's Spirit, eagerly devotes himself to the pursuit of truth and the cultivation of his understanding. Ignorance can never be bliss; much less can ignorance be the

[1] W. T. Stead, in *Books Which Have Influenced Me*, 41. [2] W. T. Vernon.

mother of godliness. It is knowledge of the truth that brings freedom, and a cultivated understanding is a Godlike possession.

¶ As the late Dean Church, himself a Dante student, says of Hooker, we may say of Dante, that he found, as the guide of human conduct, "a rule derived not from one alone, but from all the sources of light and truth with which man finds himself encompassed." And again: "His whole theory rests on the principle that the paramount and supreme guide, both of the world and of human action, is reason." "The concurrence and co-operation, each in its due place, of all possible means of knowledge for man's direction." "Conceiving of law as reason under another name, he conceived of God Himself as working under a law, which is His supreme reason, and appointing to all His works the law by which they are to work out their possible perfection. Law is that which binds the whole creation, in all its ranks and subordinations, to the perfect goodness and reason of God. Every law of God is a law of reason, and every law of reason is a law of God."[1]

## II.

### A Precept.

1. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart." This is a remarkable anticipation of New Testament teaching: "We walk by faith, not by sight." "Without faith it is impossible to please God." The trust we should repose in God admits of no limit or modification. This reminds us of the great commandment in the law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Thus, whatever we do in reference to God, whether we love Him, trust Him, or serve Him, it must be done with a heartiness, a reality, an earnestness which cannot for a moment be doubted.

It takes a long time to *learn* to trust in the Lord, and to acknowledge Him in all our ways. Those who try most to do so, who wish most to leave themselves, and all that belongs to them, to His manifest ordering—who have most reason to hope that they have given up trusting to their own understanding and wisdom in what concerns this life here—are reminded to the last how imperfectly they have learnt the lesson; how often, without knowing

[1] H. B. Garrod, *Dante, Goethe's Faust, and other Lectures*, 75.

it, they are setting their will before God's will, and fancying that they know better than God what is best for them. And if this is so with those who try to leave themselves in God's hands, how shall they who never seriously try at all be able to do so when the time of trouble comes?

¶ Faith is not mere belief; but such belief as leads us to have confidence in God—confidence in what He is to us, and does for us, and asks of us, with the necessary implication of a response on our part. And when we speak of a living, or lively faith, we mean a faith by which we live in conscious response to God's love and its demands upon us; trusting Him for to-morrow because we know that we are obeying Him to-day.[1]

¶ Faith is that temper of sympathetic and immediate response to Another's will which belongs to a recognized relationship of vital communion. It is the spirit of confident surrender, which can only be justified by an inner identification of the life. Unless this inner relationship be a fact, faith could not account for itself: but if it be a fact, it must constitute a fixed and necessary demand upon all men. All are, equally, "children of God"; and the answer to the question, "Why should I believe?" must be, for ever and for all, valid: "because you are a child of God." Faith itself lies deeper than all the capacities of which it makes use: it is, itself, the primal act of the elemental self, there at the root of life, where the being is yet whole and entire, a single personal individuality, unbroken and undivided. Faith, which is the germinal act of our love for God, is an act of the whole self, there where it is one, before it has parted off into what we can roughly describe as separate and distinguishable faculties.[2]

2. "In all thy ways acknowledge him." Here we have a sample of the almost untranslatable pregnancy and power of Hebrew speech. The English word "acknowledge" represents only one of the many meanings which are to be found in the original term. This word, originally meaning "to see," came to signify that which results from sight, unless the sense be imperfect or the understanding impaired, namely, knowledge. It exhibits knowledge at all its stages of growth. It stands for a knowledge of isolated facts, and for a knowledge of facts in their largest combinations. It describes a mere act of perception, an unsuspected discovery, a stern experience inflicted upon the dull

[1] J. R. Illingworth, *Christian Character*. [2] H. S. Holland in *Lux Mundi*.

understanding; it pictures casual acquaintance and the closest possible intimacy; it is used of knowledge by name and of knowledge face to face. It is used of the moral sense recognizing moral good or moral evil, and of the affections gaining knowledge of their object through being exercised on it. It depicts the movements, not merely of the heart and the intellect, but also of the will. It thus represents sometimes the watchful, active care of God's loving Providence, sometimes the prostrate adoration of a soul, in which knowledge of its Divine Object has passed into the highest stage, and is practically inseparable from worship. As used in the passage before us, it describes nothing less comprehensive than the whole action of man's spiritual being when face to face with the Eternal God. To "know" God in truth is to believe in Him, to fear Him, and to love Him, with all the heart, with all the soul, with all the mind, and with all the strength; to worship Him, to give Him thanks, to put our whole trust in Him, to call upon Him, to honour His holy Name and His Word, and to serve Him truly.

(1) In order to acknowledge God truly *there must be a real conviction that God rules the world.*—An atheist, who believes that no God exists, or a theist, who believes in His existence but not in His active government of earthly things, or a fatalist, who dreams that all things proceed by an iron necessity which nothing can change—not one of these men can really acknowledge God as the text requires. It is presupposed that we believe in the existence of an almighty, free, intelligent Spirit, from whom all things have sprung, and on whom all things depend; that He fills the whole universe with His presence, or illumines it with His smile; that He is guiding, controlling, and disposing all its affairs for the consummation of holy and glorious purposes; that He cares for the well-being of all His creatures, from the highest seraph who flames before His throne down to the little sparrow which cannot fall to the ground until He permits it; that He has special care for the dignity and well-being of men, and most of all for those who fear Him or who hope in His mercy. A settled conviction of all this is essential to a right acknowledgment of God. If there be no God, it is unreasonable to acknowledge any. If God be not a free or almighty intelligence, but a blind or necessary force, we may as well do homage to the storm that lays waste

our fields, or to the earthquake that converts our home into ruins. If God has no care for the concerns of this lower world, to acknowledge Him is useless; if He acts in all things quite independently of our conduct, acknowledging Him is an impertinence. If He is not graciously disposed to accept our prayer and our trust, we may as well give them to the winds. In a word, in order to yield any acknowledgment of God which is worthy of the name, there must be that state of mind described by the Apostle as the condition of all acceptable coming to God—the belief "that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

(2) It follows that *we must have communion with Him.*—It is impossible that any one can really be acknowledging God—can be thinking of anything but worldly things—who does not pray by himself in secret, and pray every day regularly. Therefore, if any one knows that he does not take care to say his private prayers to God daily, there is at once a proof and a warning to him that he is not acknowledging God, that he is living without God in the world. He may be as industrious and quiet and respectable and kind-hearted as possible, but he is living without religion, as one who has only this life to pass through, and has no everlasting state waiting for him after he is dead. Private, secret prayer, offered to God daily and regularly, is the one great proof whether we believe and trust in God. If this proof is not there, then it is certain that, whatever we may say or do, we do not in our hearts believe God, or fear Him.

(3) Then, to acknowledge God in all our ways is honestly to *admit to Him in each particular case that the matter is in His hands,* and that it is to be ordered as He may see fit. We are presumed to feel that God is actively present in all the concerns of this world, from the least to the greatest. Our own concerns, therefore, are neither too vast nor too trifling to engage His attention. Small as things may be in themselves, they are still parts of the great whole, links in the chain which girds the world and reaches up into the hand of God. The breath which stirs the seared leaf is a part of the mighty force which wheels the planets in their courses; and He who keeps the spheres moving in measured harmony numbers the hairs of our heads. Thus, to acknowledge God in all our ways is just to tell Him all this, it is just to advert emphatically to His presence as with us, to regard

each interest of our lives as placed in His hands, to view every event in the light that streams from His throne, always to feel, wherever we are or whatever we are doing, that we are in closest connexion with God, and to make a solemn acknowledgment of this.

(4) Along with all this there is to be *a sincere dependence upon God for direction and help.*—This is the practical bearing of our conscious reference to God. In the absence of this it is useless to believe in His supreme rule, or to advert to His universal presence. A devout regard to God, indeed, cannot but be pleasing in His sight, and it is a healthy state of soul. Whatever is right in itself cannot fail to be practically useful. But such a devout regard implies humble reliance upon His guidance. It is a kind of faith spread like a leaf of gold over our whole life; or, to change the figure, it is to live and breathe in the very atmosphere of prayer, though no formal petition may escape our lips. To acknowledge God in all our ways is to acknowledge His goodness and wisdom in guarding our interests; and the very thought cannot but inspire us with a humble, trustful reliance, and call forth now and then earnest entreaty from the depth of the soul. To acknowledge God is not to recognize His presence and remain blind to His perfections; it is not to mark the working of His hand and forget the goodness of His heart; or to believe that He is ever surrounding us as a watchful friend, and yet not yield Him our confidence or utter to Him our prayer. Acknowledgment of such a Being must, in the nature of things, include faith, and without this it would be only a lifeless form—a skeleton of religion without its soul.

¶ I am often tempted to trust too much to you; not, I think, to believe your wisdom, and gentleness, and patience, and faith to be greater than they are, but to think too much that I was to trust to them in you, instead of in God, because I have not felt Him to be an ever-present guide, not only into the mysteries of His own Love, not only into the meaning of past wants, but into the grounds of all right and all wise action. This and this only has confused me; all has been ordered to teach me, all to strengthen me; and I alone am wrong. Only with these thoughts others mingle; I must not, in order to recover faith in a Director, give up the direction He places in my way; I must not mistake self-will for conscience, nor impatience for honesty.

No one on earth can distinguish them for me; but He will. It so often seems to me as if two different courses of action were right or might be right; and this is what puzzles me, even though it is a blessing as binding me to people of widely different opinions.[1]

¶ On reflection I felt that I was going to make a grand fiasco in Berlin, and compromise a career which, tolerably brilliant at the outset, had already brought on me much resentment, as well as calumnies and attacks of which I have not ceased to be proud. The idea was unbearable, and I felt that, in the interest of *The Times*, as well as in my own interests, it would be better for me not to go to the Congress. . . . Just then my young friend was announced. I had not seen him for a long time, and had positively allowed him to slip my memory. Here I must confess that I have a theory which will, perhaps, be ridiculed, but which has governed my whole life. I believe in the constant intervention of a Supreme Power, directing not only our destiny in general, but such actions of ours as influence our destiny. When I see that nothing in Nature is left to chance, that immutable laws govern every movement, that the faintest spark that glimmers in the firmament disappears and reappears with strict punctuality, I cannot suppose that anything to do with mankind goes by chance, and that every individuality composing it is not governed by a definite and inflexible plan. The great men whose names escape oblivion are like the planets which we know by name, and which stand out from among the multitude of stars without names. We know their motions and destinies. We know at what time the comet moving in infinite space will reappear, and that the smallest stars, whose existence escapes us, obey the fixed law which governs the universe. . . . Everything moves by a fixed law, and man is master of his own destiny only because he can accept or refuse, by his own intervention and action, the place he should fill and the path traced out for him by the general decree which regulates the movements of every creature. By virtue of this theory it will be easily understood that I have always endeavoured to divine the intentions and designs of the Supreme Will which directs us. I have always sought not to thwart that ubiquitous guidance, but to enter on the path which it seemed to point out to me. As, at the very time that the idea of going to Berlin plunged me in despair, my door opened and I saw my young friend enter, it struck me that he was destined to assist me in the accomplishment of the task devolving on me in Berlin. . . . At the very hour on the 13th of July when the treaty of 1878 was signed in Berlin, a

[1] *Life of Octavia Hill*, 155.

London telegram announced that *The Times* had published the preamble and sixty-four articles, with an English translation appended.[1]

## III.

### A Promise.

**"He shall direct thy paths."**

1. This is not a mere arbitrary promise. If we trust God with all our heart, and acknowledge Him in all our ways, we have within us the guarantee of sure guidance. God has placed man's happiness in his own keeping; and by true submission to the Divine will man is able to "lay hold on eternal life." The Kingdom of God is within. It comes not with observation. Its rewards are the continued extension of the soul's capacities; its treasures are incorruptible, laid up beyond the power of rust or robber. Surrendering ourselves, not to a blind destiny, but to the guidance of holy and eternal principles, we are unconcerned about the future. Precisely what that future may bring forth we know not; but the unknown is to us neither mysterious nor terrible. Our delight being in the Lord, that is, in the integrity and holiness of His will, we know that He will give us the desires of our heart. Waiting patiently for Him, and committing our ways unto Him, we know that He "shall bring it to pass." Clouds and darkness may befall us, but we know that He, the eternal Sun, is above the clouds, and will, sooner or later, shine upon us.

O end to which our currents tend,
  Inevitable sea,
To which we flow, what do we know,
  What can we guess of thee?

A roar we hear upon thy shore,
  As we our course fulfil;
And we divine a sun will shine,
  And be above us still.

¶ Mr. Gladstone's speech on the second reading of the Reform Bill of 1866, as a whole, ranks among the greatest of his per-

[1] H. S. De Blowitz, *My Memoirs*, 132.

formances. The party danger, the political theme, the new responsibility of command, the joy of battle, all seemed to transfigure the orator before the vision of the House, as if he were the Greek hero sent forth to combat by Pallas Athene, with flame streaming from head and shoulders, from helmet and shield, like the star of summer rising effulgent from the sea. The closing sentences became memorable:—"You cannot fight against the future," he exclaimed with a thrilling gesture, "time is on our side. The great social forces which move onwards in their might and majesty, and which the tumult of our debates does not for a moment impede or disturb—those great social forces are against you; they are marshalled on our side; and the banner which we now carry in this fight, though perhaps at some moment it may droop over our sinking heads, yet it soon again will float in the eye of Heaven, and it will be borne by the firm hands of the united people of the three kingdoms, perhaps not to an easy, but to a certain and to a not far distant victory."[1]

2. How will this direction be effected? Not by an audible voice from heaven, not by the sudden appearance of angelic messengers to point the way, not even by any undefinable and irresistible persuasion, arising unaccountably within the mind, that a certain path and no other is to be taken. Of miraculous interposition there is no need, and the time has gone by for superstition. No, God will guide men that acknowledge Him through the working of their own minds and the counsels of others, by opening new paths and placing fresh aids within their reach, by influencing their souls through the teachings of His Spirit, and preserving them from false signs by which they were wont to be led astray.

(1) God sometimes leads us, and we know not how; we cannot say by what means it is. We are in the midst of difficulties, our way seems hedged up, foes are on every side, snares are spread for our feet, and darkness is on our prospects. No human help is nigh, and possibly, if it were, it could not effect our deliverance. We acknowledge God, and in the course of a short time all these difficulties clear away as of themselves, the whole scene changes, everything seems to fall into its right place, and we walk again at large as free men. We cannot tell how the change is effected. It appears as if the shadows of night had given place to the

[1] Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, ii. 203.

realities of day. We are like them that dream, our mouth is filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. "The Lord hath done great things for us." Such events as these are to be found in all Christian experience. We cannot tell how God directs our paths, but the direction itself is so real and so marvellously brought about as to illustrate to our wondering eyes His infinite wisdom and power.

¶ On one of the Irish lakes there is a particular spot where there appears no possible means of exit; you may be within twenty yards of the right course, and yet beat about for hours without finding it. But the experienced boatman can make his way to it in a few minutes. So it is often in human affairs. Your frail bark may be tossed about for days upon the cold waters; you are surrounded by hills which form an enclosed prison, and all escape seems cut off, but acknowledge God, and the path before hidden gleams up in brightness before you, and you wonder that you had not seen it before.[1]

(2) God often directs us by obstacles and delays. We want to proceed in a certain direction, and to gain a certain point. We acknowledge God therein, and the only response is that He appears to cast up loftier barriers in our way, and to render our progress still more difficult and perplexing. How is this? For a time we are ready to faint in despair; but gradually it becomes clear, in the light of the events themselves, that these barriers were safeguards, breaks to check a too impetuous descent down the incline, or stepping stones to help us over a mountain elevation which could not otherwise have been scaled.

¶ Two vessels may sail out from the same distant shore; the one, impatient to set sail, and to reach her destination as speedily as possible, departs some days before the other, but thereby encounters a storm, and is thrown some weeks behind. The gain of a little time in the one case proves a heavy loss; in the other, the loss of a little time at first proves an immense gain afterwards. Now, if the second vessel had been thus delayed awhile at first under the direction of one who clearly foresaw the coming storm, would not all men have said that the direction was most wise and good? So God often directs our paths. He holds us back from coming danger; He keeps us, as it were, in the harbour of safety until the storm has passed by, and though, during this time, we chafe and fret, as if our hopes were gone, by-and-by, under smiling

[1] J. M. Charlton.

skies, our vessel flies before the wind, leaps over the waves, and enters with flying colours the long-desired haven. Then at length are we filled with the assurance that Divine wisdom and goodness have guided our voyage.[1]

(3) God sometimes seems to guide our way even by our very enemies. They come forth in power to oppose us, to ruin our plans, to thwart our objects, and the final result is that they promote their accomplishment, and that in a degree which could not otherwise have been attained. We and they may be alike blind to the real conditions of success; but God, who knows all the secret workings of causes, which are hidden from us, in this way most effectually secures our ends.

¶ I cannot say what very quiet, relying comfort there is in doing everything quite openly and irrespective of the consequences. We are weak and uncomfortable when we act for man's view of things; it is humbugging God in reality, not man, and as surely as we do that we shall reap the reward. The things may be comparatively small, but a very immense principle is involved in them. It is most wonderful what power and strength are given to us by living for God's view and not man's. I do many things which are wrong, and I can say truly that, thanks to God, I am comforted in all the troubles, because I do not conceal them from Him. He is my Master, and to Him alone am I accountable. If I own in my heart that I am culpable, I have such comfort that I do not care what my fellow-man says. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding."[2]

[1] J. M. Charlton. [2] General C. G. Gordon, *Letters to His Sister*, 23.

# The Two Paths.

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## The Two Paths.

**But the path of the righteous is as the shining light,**
**That shineth more and more unto the perfect day.**
**The way of the wicked is as darkness:**
**They know not at what they stumble.—Prov. iv. 18, 19.**

The "path" which a man pursues signifies, according to the most usual meaning of the word, his style and manner of conduct, the principles according to which he acts. Thus is the word used in verse 11 of this chapter: "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths." There is another sense in which we find the word "path" sometimes employed; it indicates the condition or destiny of a man; thus, in Job viii. 11–13, "Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water? Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish." In the text "the path of the righteous" cannot properly be taken in either of these senses exclusively; it includes both. It signifies simply the just man's course through life, comprising the development alike of his own character and conduct and of his destiny as a child of light. The word "light" is used here in a peculiar and limited sense, to mean the dawn, the sunrise. So it is used, as our English Bible expressly indicates, in Nehemiah viii. 3: "And he [Ezra] read therein before the street that was before the water gate, from the light [from the morning] until midday." Only when we consider this do we perceive the full force and beauty of the text. "Perfect (*i.e.* steadfast, immovable) day" signifies, in the figurative language of the text, noon. And in this we have an example of the incompetency of that which is natural to express the spiritual and eternal. In the day of the soul there is no mere momentary noon, declining into afternoon and night. But what the thing could not properly express, the word translated "perfect" is fitted to suggest.

Inverting the order of the text we shall consider, first, the way of darkness, and, secondly, the way of light.

## I.

### The Way of Darkness.

**"The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble."**

These words present a picture of a man out on a dangerous mountain track. He has determined upon going this way. He has despised the advice and entreaties of the guides, although aware that his track is beset with dangers. He was told before he started of the deep ravines and yawning precipices. At times, while trying to find his way, he feels the peril that he has exposed himself to in venturing upon a path so dangerous, a path with which he is totally unacquainted. Now the darkness is coming on; but he still hopes to find his way. Presently the darkness has completely hidden the path, and made it doubly perilous. To stand still is to perish in the night; and yet he cannot hope to find his way now, but wanders on in the darkness. He does not know where he is, or where he is going; the man is lost in the dark; he goes stumbling on till suddenly he stumbles upon his fate and is lost in night.

1. *The way of sin at the beginning.*—Sin makes us do things we should never think of doing in our right senses. It makes us the subject of the cruellest delusion. To close our eyes against the light is to surrender to the devil, who leads us captive at his will into ever-deepening darkness.

¶ "There are none so blind as those who *will* not see," and it is really astonishing to notice how determined many people are not to see what their sinful course must lead to and must end in. I have very seldom known, indeed I do not remember a single case, in which either disease, or pain, or early death, or poverty, or disgrace, or imprisonment, or madness, or any other result of wrong-doing, acted to any great extent as a warning to others pursuing the same way to destruction. The effect, if there be any effect at all, soon passes off. Not a week passes but some one is detected in fraud and embezzlement, but every other thief

thinks himself cunning enough to be safe. "Dead through excessive drinking" is the verdict given day by day, all the week through, and all the year round; but every other excessive drinker thinks that he does not drink to excess, or that he has a constitution that will stand it. Thus, verily, "the way of the wicked is darkness."[1]

¶ Where chiefly the beauty of God's working was manifested to men, warning was also given, and that to the full, of the enduring of His indignation against sin. It seems one of the most cunning and frequent of self-deceptions to turn the heart away from this warning, and refuse to acknowledge anything in the fair scenes of the natural creation but beneficence. Men in general lean towards the light, so far as they contemplate such things at all, most of them passing "by on the other side" either in mere plodding pursuit of their own work, irrespective of what good or evil is around them, or else in selfish gloom, or selfish delight, resulting from their own circumstances at the moment. What between hard-hearted people, thoughtless people, busy people, humble people, and cheerfully-minded people, giddiness of youth, and preoccupations of age,—philosophies of faith, and cruelties of folly,—priest and Levite, masquer and merchantman, all agreeing to keep their own side of the way,—the evil that God sends to warn us gets to be forgotten, and the evil that He sends to be mended by us gets left unmended. And then, because people shut their eyes to the dark indisputableness of the facts in front of them, their Faith, such as it is, is shaken or uprooted by every darkness in what is revealed to them. In the present day it is not easy to find a well-meaning man among our more earnest thinkers, who will not take upon himself to dispute the whole system of redemption, because he cannot unravel the mystery of the punishment of sin. But can he unravel the mystery of the punishment of *No* sin? . . . We cannot reason of these things. But this I know—and this may by all men be known—that no good or lovely thing exists in this world without its correspondent darkness; and that the universe presents itself continually to mankind under the stern aspect of warning, or of choice, the good and the evil set on the right hand and the left.[2]

2. *The way of sin as it continues.*—It is a road that runs through sombre passes, like some of those paths far in the heart of the mountains, on which the sun never shines. This is

[1] H. S. Brown, *Manliness*, 89.

[2] Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. iv. chap. xix. § 32.

worse than the Valley of the Shadow of Death, for in the fearful path of sin there is no guiding hand and no protecting staff. The darkness of this course is exhaled from the evil committed upon it.

¶ The horrible features of Vanity Fair are carefully concealed from the young man or woman setting out in life. Satan appears then as an angel of light, with seductive air and promises of boundless pleasure and enjoyment. The unhappy victim soon begins to realize the deceitfulness of the tempter and the bitterness of sin. As he rushes with the crowd of pleasure-seekers into the haunts and circles of evil men, he becomes absorbed in their follies and fashions; opportunities of improvement are neglected, facilities of progress are forgotten, virtuous habits are thrown off, and care for higher things is neglected. By degrees, the mind and spirit become the mere vassals of animal passion or selfish gratification, and the day of life passes without any preparation for a blessed future. Amid the whirl and excitement of pleasure-seeking or money-hunting, there soon come hours of gloom and sadness. The fruits of sin are like the fabled apples of Sodom, fair to outside view but poisonous within. Many who frequent gay and festive scenes carry into them sad and heavy hearts, many of them cherish memories of days when innocence and truth gave brightness to their souls; many are haunted by lapses from virtue, and deeds of evil which were committed perhaps long ago, but which memory revives, until the heart sinks and the spirit writhes beneath the rankling of the wound. As life creeps on, the pursuit of sin becomes more irksome, the burden of a wounded conscience becomes more rankling; and unless by a heartfelt repentance, and an acceptance of mercy through Christ, the transgressor returns to the Father's house, the end comes in darkness.[1]

¶ Of what Christians call "the Divine Government"—but which he regarded as "the sum of the customs of matter," Huxley believed it to be "wholly just." "The more I know intimately of the lives of other men (to say nothing of my own)," he wrote, "the more obvious it is to me that the wicked does not flourish, nor is the righteous punished. But for this to be clear we must bear in mind what almost all forget—that the rewards of life are contingent upon obedience to the whole law—physical as well as moral—and that moral obedience will not atone for physical sin, or *vice versa*. The ledger of the Almighty is strictly kept, and every one of us has the balance of his operations paid over to him

[1] W. J. Townsend, *The Ladder of Life*, 256.

at the end of every minute of his existence. The absolute justice of the system of things is as clear to me as any scientific fact. The gravitation of sin to sorrow is as certain as that of the earth to the sun, and more so—for experimental proof of the fact is within reach of us all—nay, is before us all in our own lives, if we had but eyes to see it."[1]

3. *The way of sin as it ends.*—The sinner has no prospect of light beyond. There are no Beulah heights for him at the farther end of the gloomy valley. His night of sin will be followed by no dawn of blessed light. He presses on only to deeper and yet deeper darkness. If he will not return, there is nothing before him but the darkness of death. The one way of escape is backwards—to retrace his steps in humble penitence. Then, indeed, he may see the welcome light of his Father's home, and even earlier the Light of the world, the Saviour who has come out into the darkness to lead him back to God. For the sinner who persists in his evil course there can be no better prospect than that described by Byron in his poem on "Darkness"—

> The world was void,
> The populous and the powerful was a lump,
> Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless,
> A lump of death—a chaos of hard clay.
> The rivers, lakes, and ocean all stood still,
> And nothing stirr'd within their silent depths;
> Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,
> And their masts fell down piecemeal: as they dropp'd
> They slept on the abyss without a surge—
> The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave,
> The moon, their mistress, had expired before;
> The winds were wither'd in the stagnant air,
> And the clouds perish'd; Darkness had no need
> Of aid from them—She was the Universe.

¶ The death of Lord Pembroke, whose character and aims Spencer estimated very highly, removed one more from the ever narrowing circle of his friends and acquaintances. To the Countess of Pembroke he wrote on 26th June 1895: "On the great questions you raise I should like to comment at some length had I the energy to spare. The hope that continual groping, though in the dark, may eventually discover the clue is one I can

[1] *Life of T. H. Huxley*, by his Son, i. 220.

scarcely entertain, for the reason that human intelligence appears to me incapable of framing any conception of the required kind. It seems to me that our best course is to submit to the limitations imposed by the nature of our minds, and to live as contentedly as we may in ignorance of that which lies behind things as we know them. My own feeling respecting the ultimate mystery is such that of late years I cannot even try to think of infinite space without some feeling of terror, so that I habitually shun the thought."[1]

## II.

### The Shining Way.

**"The path of the righteous is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."**

1. The "path of the righteous" has all the great characteristics suggested by light, namely, truth, purity, joy, life. Perhaps the leading idea is that of holy gladness. In Scripture the favourite emblem of heaven and the heavenly, of God and the godly, is light, —of the evil power and the evil place, darkness; and none could be more striking and expressive. It is expressive of all the phenomena of the two contrasted worlds, alike in their nature, in their origin, and in their consequences. And light, as symbolical of the good, speaks to us of enlightenment of the understanding, the purity of holiness, and true happiness, even as darkness speaks to us of the opposites. Light means wisdom and holiness; and thus the Apostle Paul, writing to the Ephesians, uses it: "Ye were sometimes darkness" (*i.e.* foolish and unholy), "but now are ye light in the Lord": your ignorance, that is to say, has been dispelled by the knowledge in Christ of the Holy God and reconciled Father. "Walk as children of light"; act, that is, in accordance with those principles of heavenly wisdom wherewith your darkened understanding has been enlightened, and shine in the bright purity of holiness. The just man, then, is a child of light, first of all, because through Divine grace he has been endued with wisdom, and has the seeds of holiness implanted within him.

¶ The message of Fox was to make men realize that individual inspiration was not a thing of the past, and that true assurance

[1] D. Duncan, *The Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer*, 370.

and guidance were open to every man who would follow the inward illumination. Attention to this inner light resulted in the discovery of sin and of the overcoming life in Christ. "Every one of you hath a light from Christ which lets you see you should not lie, nor do wrong to any nor swear nor curse nor take God's name in vain, nor steal. It is the light that shows you these evil deeds: which, if you love and come unto it and follow it, will lead you to Christ who is the way to the Father, from whom it comes: where no unrighteousness enters nor ungodliness. If you hate this light it will be your condemnation: but if you love it and come to it, you will come to Christ." The important thing for men to realize is that they have the witness of God in their own hearts against moral evils. It is not any outward code, scriptural or social, which reveals sin as sin, but the light of God in the conscience. If men would humbly and patiently wait upon God, the path of obedience would be made plain and the power to obey be abundantly bestowed.[1]

2. The life of the righteous is a life of increasing lustre. Like the light, it shineth "more and more." The day does not burst upon the earth at once. The night does not vanish and come to an end in a moment. There is a slow and gradual change; at first a very faint light far away in the eastern sky, while all the rest is dark; then it spreads gently wider and higher, and wakes up all things to a new life, bringing to sight mountains and valleys, streams and woods, which lay but now in the thick darkness, as though they were not. Then, at last, when all the shadows have grown pale, and the flood of shining light has poured its streams into every secret place, so that there is night and darkness no more—then the glorious sun comes forth, "like a giant refreshed," at first indeed made dim by the mists that still hang upon the earth, but soon breaking through, as it were, till he rides high in the clear sky, and, with the full power of his light and heat, pours down upon earth "the perfect day." But it is not always so. There are mornings of a different sort. Sometimes clouds and storms come with the breaking day. The sullen thunder-cloud, or the heavy gloom of mists and rain, half hide the feeble light. The sun passes behind great folds of heavy cloud, and you can see his rays only now and then through some rent or opening in the curtain that hides him from view. But he stays

[1] H. G. Wood, *George Fox*, 28.

not, he changes not, in his course. He fulfils his daily round. He is the same, whatever else may be. And, whether it be in calm, or whether it be in storm, the light "shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Such is the parable of the text. The path of the righteous begins like the light of dawn. It is small in its beginning. The new-born Christian is like a rising sun struggling through the mists of morn. It must travel to its noon. Moving in the skies, far beyond all malign influence of earth, no hand but that of the Creator can stay it in its onward progress. Black clouds may steal it from the eye, but no cloud touches its fiery rim. Behind and above the cloud, it travels to its noon. For us its brightness may be absorbed in darkness, but in itself it shineth bright as ever. Even so is it with the Christian. Far above and beyond the malign influences of this sinful world, he too travels to his everlasting noon. No hand but the hand of the Almighty Redeemer, who set him forth on his glorious course, can touch him. Clouds of sorrow, and it may be clouds of sin, may dim his glory to the earthly eye, or leave him even in black eclipse; but behind the darkness he proceedeth from height to height, climbing the heavens.

¶ "Divine grace" (says Leighton, on 1 Pet. i. 7), "even in the heart of weak and sinful man, is an invincible thing. Drown it in the waters of adversity, it rises more beautiful, as not being drowned indeed, but only washed: throw it into the furnace of fiery trials, it comes out purer, and loses nothing but the dross which our corrupt nature mixes with it." It belongeth then, by very necessity of nature, to the child of God that he grow—grow, so to speak, in bulk of spiritual life, grow in strength of all spiritual faculties, grow in largeness of spiritual result. Where there is no growth, there is no life. The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more.[1]

(1) Growth in the spiritual life is the gradual unfolding within of the powers of a life communicated to us. There is a supernatural life within the justified, for through union with the Incarnate Word we have received from Him the life that is in Himself. The life of God dwells without measure in the Son, and passes in measure into His members. In the justified this gift of life is no longer dormant, but is stirred up, and becomes an

[1] J. Hamilton, *Faith in God*, 334.

active principle within, as its presence is recognized and responded to. This life, thus willingly yielded to, is ever manifesting its vigour in the inward growth. As in nature, so in grace, the babe becomes the child, the child develops into the young man, the young man ripens into the father. But there cannot be this growth in the Divine life without the communication to us, through the Holy Ghost, of the life of God, and our surrender to it by repentance and faith. It will not do to imagine that a man may live and die in darkness, and that then a dazzling light will be shed upon him, like some splendid garment outside him, which will make him all at once meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. No, the light must be within, kindled in the soul, growing there, cleansing and beautifying it; the soul must grow in the light. This is what we call the internal glory, the growth of the character in beauty.

¶ Throughout these pages [of his annotated Bible], we are constantly impressed by the large mental frontier of Smetham—his range of faculty, his many-sidedness. Here is a fragrant wild flower of the sermonic type, which crops up in that paradise of perfumed philosophy, Solomon's Proverbs. It elucidates that celestial metaphor of the soul's advancement, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The annotation is this: "The nature of the light remains the same. The first feeble ray of the morning has the same chemical elements as those of the brightest noon. So with Christian character."[1]

(2) To walk in the light gives expansion to all man's capacities. There is no mental or moral faculty of human nature which is not improved and perfected by walking in the path which leads to eternal life. This results from close and constant association with the Christ, who is the treasury of wisdom and knowledge, and the sum of all excellence. Intimate fellowship with Him is health-giving in the highest degree. It means purity of atmosphere, for He takes us to the mount of vision above the fogs and vapours of impurity and sin; it means strength, because He is the Bread of Life, of which if a man eat he lives for ever; it means growth on every side of life, because the Christians say: "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." Thus in Him and through Him the Christian is perfected.

[1] W. G. Beardmore, *James Smetham, Painter, Poet, Essayist*, 82.

¶ When Christian was passing through the Valley of the Shadow of Death it was night, and he could scarcely see his way, but the day began to break as he came near the end of the first part of it, and the sun shone ever brighter and brighter upon the more dangerous part of the valley, so that he was able to walk more safely. Then said he, "His candle shineth on my head, and by His light I go through the darkness." And so, while there may be but a feeble light on your path when you first begin to love and serve Jesus, it will grow brighter like the rising sun as you continue to do so.[1]

(3) "Unto the perfect day." At this point the simile of the text fails. Here the sun rises but to set; it travels to its midday splendour only to give place to midnight gloom. It is not so there: her "sun shall no more go down," for "there is no night there." Here light streams to us from God only through created media of His appointment. He "made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also" (Gen. i. 16), and through them light streams from Him to us. Hence it is in nature as it is in grace; light and darkness are constantly interchanged, whilst we receive His gifts through created media. But in the Heavenly Country there is no such change, because "the Lord himself is her everlasting light," and the light that is in Him streams forth upon the children of light in one unending day. Blessed permanence of that unending day, that undecaying light! There is no night there, thank God! It is not advance and retrogression, but one unchecked progress; it is not the interchange of happiness and misery, but one unending song of the children of the day, revelling in the everlasting light.

This means not only glory, but also the development of humanity beneath the rays that stream from the light of God. It is there that the hidden powers of the intellect are developed, and the magnificence of mind is manifested. It is there that the capacities of the heart to love are recognized, for there alone its hidden depths are sounded. It is there that the wondrous energies of the spirit are unfolded, in a degree now inconceivable to us, as it is flooded with the vision of God. There, and there only, is the grandeur of humanity realized, where the varied capacities of each created nature attain their perfection. In the

[1] J. Jeffrey, *The Way of Life*, 52.

imperfect there is no rest, but when we are perfect, "as he is perfect, in the perfect day," then shall be realized by us the joy of the sons of God.

¶ When the organism of the oak and the environment which fosters its growth unite to produce the sturdy king of the forest, we consider ourselves justified in concluding that God meant an oak-tree to be the outcome. And when we find a moral nature so constituted that it tends to develop along the line of rectitude, purity, and love, and an environment which offers the least resistance in the direction of righteousness, it is a safe inference that God purposed the development of that nature in the direction of righteousness. When He made the way of transgressors hard, and caused the path of the just to shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day, God pointed the direction in which our race was to move. He indicated the destiny of man. He forecast the consummation of the work of the ages. He foreshadowed in that one fact the moral order and progress of man.

One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves.[1]

¶ Our destiny is potential within ourselves. Every man, woman, and child possesses this potentiality, this shaping spirit of prayer and the love of God. The golden stairs are in every home, in every house of business, and workshop, whereby, in deep communings like those of Jesus on the Galilean hills, we may bring down troops of joys and graces to fill the common day with song. It is our fault altogether if the lower chambers of life are dull and spiritless. The task is difficult no doubt. So much the more need for that steadfast communion with the Indwelling Love which gives the soul a power and persistence not long to be denied. Resolute always to see what good there is, and to throw the whole weight of our soul on to the side of that good, we shall find our love consuming the evil, and liberating kindred souls to co-operate with us.[2]

Through love to light, O wonderful the way
That leads from darkness to the perfect day!
From darkness and from sorrow of the night,
To morning that comes singing o'er the sea.
Through love to light; through light, O God, to Thee
Who art the Love of love, the eternal Light of light.

[1] J. C. Adams, *The Leisure of God*, 46.
[2] T. J. Hardy, *The Gospel of Pain*.

# The Heart.

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## The Heart.

**Keep thy heart with all diligence;**
**For out of it are the issues of life.—Prov. iv. 23.**

1. In the Bible, and more especially in the Book of Proverbs, the word "heart" is among the most pregnant in all language. As the heart physically is the central organ of the body, it is often used to denote the *life*, the soul itself. "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my *heart* and my flesh cry out unto the living God." Then there is a large group of passages which show that the heart in the Bible stands for the seat of the emotions, as in the popular phraseology of every language. But in Hebrew it also represented the seat of intelligence, the tone and quality of the character, as when a clear, pure, sincere heart is ascribed to any one, or when it is said, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Further, it stands for will or purpose: "Do all that is in thine heart" means "in thine intention or desire." Because the heart is thus the focus of the personal life, the secret laboratory in which every influence which penetrates thither is reacted upon, so that it passes out charged with the colour and quality of the inner life, it is natural that it should be spoken of here as the central fact of our nature, and that God should demand it for His own. When we give our heart to Him, we give Him the most precious, because the most determinative, element in our life.

2. The Greek version, which was very generally used in our Lord's time, had a beautiful variation of the text: "In order that thy fountains may not fail thee, guard them in the heart." It was after all but a new emphasis on the old teaching of the Book of Proverbs when Jesus taught the necessity of heart purity, and when He showed that out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, and all the things which defile a man. Yet this lesson of inward-

ness has always been the most difficult of all to learn. Christianity itself has always been declining from it and falling into the easier but futile ways of externalism; and even Christian homes have usually failed in their influence on the young, chiefly because their religious observances have fallen into formalism, and, while the outward conduct has been regulated, the inner springs of action have not been touched.

¶ Visit the electrical power-house of any large town. Watch the whirling dynamo. Here is the energy that drives the car; here is generated the spark that lights the night; here is born the impulse that begets the motion and brightness outside. Musing thus, you will understand what is meant by the heart. Press the illustration further; mark how this monster is guarded and controlled, and then think of the last thunderstorm you can remember. In the engine-house the power is in subjection, watched with all diligence; outside in the wide universe it is untamed, uncontrolled, wrecking and damaging and contorting. On the one hand, assisting commerce, giving brightness and cheerfulness—the issues of life. On the other, devastation and ruin—the issues of death. Life and death by the same power. Controlled, life; uncontrolled, death. This power is analogous to the heart of man.[1]

## I.

### The Centre of Life.

1. The heart that we carry in our body may rightly be called the centre of life. The physical heart is a large bunch of muscles, placed between the two lungs and acting as a fountain of life to the whole body. How wonderful it is in its structure—its auricles, and ventricles, its valves and blood-vessels! "The blood is the life"; and every moment it is being driven by the unresting stroke of the heart's pump into the great arteries and all through the body. The heart is the central organ of the human frame; and the health of the body depends upon its soundness and its proper action. Only when this action is healthy and true will the whole body be full of power, energy, and beauty. When, on the other hand, the heart is feeble or diseased, it will send languor and mischief through the whole system. This organ, in

[1] J. H. Ward.

short, is the mainspring, the determining factor in the life of the body. The other organs work well or ill according to the state of the heart.

2. But the Old Testament locates in the heart the centre of personal being. It is not merely the home of the affections, but also the seat of will, of moral purpose. As this text says, "the issues of life" flow from it in all the multitudinous variety of their forms. The stream parts into many heads, but it has one fountain. To the Hebrew thinkers the heart was the indivisible, central unity which manifested itself in the whole of the outward life. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." The heart is the man. And that personal centre has a moral character which comes to light in, and gives unity and character to, all his deeds.

(1) Out of the heart are the issues of life. It is not the mind, the thought-power, the judgment-forming part of our nature that holds the primacy and sits upon the throne. The mind, with its thoughts, its judgments, its ideas, is the servant of our practical needs. The mind, in fact, came into being, was organized and developed because of our practical needs. It is not the regal and aristocratic member of our being that it has sometimes been assumed to be. It is a veritable slave and lackey, serving in homespun, continually driven, and made to work overtime at the whip's end of the dominant forces of life. Because primitive man was conscious of hunger, he contrived a way to till the ground, to plant, to reap, to grind and bake. The mind did not invent bread, and then coax the appetite to eat, because bread forsooth was good. Man was hungry; the appetite was imperious master, and it compelled the mind to find some way of satisfying that need. Because man was naked, he also invented dress, first from the skins of wild beasts, then from their woolly covering, woven into a fabric. Because he was subjected to the wind and the rain, to the sun and the frost, he drove the thinking part of him to devise a tent and a roof, a protecting shelter from the prowling lion, or a stockade against human foe. Here is the invariable order: need—invention—satisfaction. And this is actually all that the mind, with its knowledge, has ever done for man; in the last analysis it will always reduce to this—the discovery of a way, continuously a better way, between these two

terms; need, and the satisfaction of the need. Out of the heart have been the issues of life from the outset. The needs, the desires, the great passions, the urgent impulses—these have been in control. It is they who have sat on the throne.

(2) The condition of the heart determines our influence. The world over, the most potent force is not thought, but love. Argument often convinces while affection sways in a contrary direction. A teacher's wisdom, with all the fascinations of the schools, moves us less than a mother's pleading and tears. Even where masses of men bow before eloquent oratory, it is the power of sincerity and earnestness in the speaker that moves even those who differ. We all instinctively feel that the secret of heroism is noble affection, unselfish love, and sacrifice. There is a sort of righteousness that only awakens a cold admiration; while goodness, which is righteousness touched with love, leads men to die for its possessor.

¶ When Wilberforce, the great apostle of liberty in Europe, was turning the world upside-down, one man asked another, "What is the secret of the power of Wilberforce? There are many men with more brains and more culture." And his friends answered, "The secret of Wilberforce is that he has a heart full of sympathy." And that is the secret of multitudes of people who are doing great good in the world. Do not keep guard over your heart with the purpose only of keeping bad things out of it, but keep watch over it to see that the fountains of sympathy and brotherly kindness are open and flowing day by day.[1]

(3) That which goes so far to mould character and to shape influence, must determine destiny. When the great judicial scales of the Universal Judge are at last hung, it cannot be otherwise than that the central affections should settle which way those scales preponderate: what we have most truly loved must have vital connexion with the eternal future—not only with the entrance into Heaven, but the capacity for its joys. Our affections both reveal what character essentially is and forecast what it is to be—even more than our thoughts; for the affections largely prompt our habits of thought, determining what images we love to contemplate. The essence both of sin and of holiness is largely here; for the acts both of sin and of saintliness could have little

[1] L. A. Banks, *The Problems of Youth*, 85.

moral quality were there no moral preference behind them. It is the love of evil that makes sin so damning, and the love of holiness that is the heart of sainthood. But for this heart affection for evil, how could the imagination be employed as sin's artist, or memory as its treasure gatherer, or the will as its marshal? But for this, even the Devil's hook would be bare of bait, and his wiles would find no response in us, as they found none in our tempted Master.

¶ In a letter to his mother at Scotsbrig, Carlyle writes from Craigenputtock, in September 1833: "But I must tell you something of myself: for I know many a morning, my dear mother, you 'come in by me' in your rambles through the world after those precious to you. If you had eyes to see on these occasions you would find everything quite tolerable here. I have been rather busy, though the fruit of my work is rather inward, and has little to say for itself. I have yet hardly put pen to paper; but foresee that there is a time coming. *All* my griefs, I can better and better see, lie in good measure at my own door: were I right in *my own heart*, nothing else would be far wrong with me. This, as you well understand, is true of every mortal, and I advise all that hear me to *believe* it, and to lay it practically to their own case."[1]

¶ In the course of a walk in the park at Edgeworthstown, I happened to use some phrase which conveyed (though not perhaps meant to do so) the impression that I suspected Poets and Novelists of being a good deal accustomed to look at life and the world only as materials for art. A soft and pensive shade came over Scott's face as he said, "I fear you have some very young ideas in your head; are you not too apt to measure things by some reference to literature—to disbelieve that anybody can be worth much care who has no knowledge of that sort of thing, or taste for it? God help us! what a poor world this would be if that were the true doctrine! I have read books enough, and observed and conversed with enough of eminent and splendidly cultivated minds, too, in my time; but, I assure you, I have heard higher sentiments from the lips of poor uneducated men and women, when exerting the spirit of severe yet gentle heroism under difficulties and afflictions, or speaking their simple thoughts as to circumstances in the lot of friends and neighbours, than I ever yet met with out of the pages of the Bible. We shall never learn to feel and respect our real calling and destiny, unless we

[1] J. A. Froude, *Thomas Carlyle, 1795–1835*, ii. 368.

have taught ourselves to consider everything as moonshine, compared with the education of the heart."[1]

¶ Too soon did the Doctors of the Church forget that the heart, the moral nature, was the beginning and the end; and that truth, knowledge, and insight were comprehended in its expansion. This was the true and first apostasy,—when in council and synod the Divine Humanities of the Gospel gave way to speculative Systems, and Religion became a Science of Shadows under the name of Theology, or at best a bare Skeleton of Truth, without life or interest, alike inaccessible and unintelligible to the majority of Christians. For these, therefore, there remained only rites and ceremonies and spectacles, shows and semblances. Thus among the learned the Substance of things hoped for passed into Notions; and for the unlearned the Surfaces of things became Substance. The Christian world was for centuries divided into the Many that did not think at all, and the Few who did nothing but think,—both alike unreflecting, the one from defect of the act, the other from the absence of an object.[2]

## II.

### The Keeping of the Heart.

"Keep thy heart above all keeping." God guards very carefully the heart He has put in our body. He has put the strongest bones all round it, so that, though other parts may be easily hurt, the heart is safe. Well, the text says that we should guard the heart of our real lives in the same way "with all diligence," above everything else; because, if the heart goes wrong, the whole life goes wrong with it.

¶ One of the most famous and valuable diamonds in the world is the "Koh-i-nur," or Mountain of Light, which belongs to the British Crown. This gem was exhibited in the Great Exhibition of 1851, and was an object of special interest. It lay upon a little cushion in a case with glass panels, the inside being lighted up with gas. And there was always a group of people crowding to see it. But it was also an object of peculiar care. For while the whole of the Crystal Palace, which contained so many treasures, was well guarded, a special watchman paced to and fro

[1] Lockhart, *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, ch. lxiii.
[2] Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*.

by day and night to guard the "Koh-i-nur." Even so ought every Christian, above all other valuables that he has to guard, to "keep" his heart, for it is the citadel of his life.[1]

1. Our nature is evidently not a republic, but a monarchy. It is full of blind impulses, and hungry desires, which take no heed of any law but their own satisfaction. If the reins are thrown on the necks of these untamed horses, they will drag the man to destruction. They are safe only when they are curbed and bitted, and held well in. Then there are tastes and inclinations which need guidance and are plainly meant to be subordinate. The will is to govern all the lower self, and conscience is to govern the will. Unmistakably there are parts of every man's nature which are meant to serve, and parts which are appointed to rule, and to let the servants usurp the place of the rulers is to bring about as wild a confusion within as the Preacher lamented that he had seen in the anarchic times when he wrote —princes walking and beggars on horseback. As George Herbert has it—

> Give not thy humours way;
> God gave them to thee under lock and key.

¶ Savage tribes not only fight with poisoned arrows; they have been known to creep into another tribe's country, and put poison into the wells, so that when the tired soldier, the thirsting woman and child, and the poor beasts of the forest came to the well to slake their thirst, they drank death in every drop of water that passed their lips. Now, would you think a chief stern, or too particular, if at war-time he ordered his people to guard the wells? Would not such an order be a kind one? Would not the meaning of it be, "Save your own lives, and the lives of your wives and children"? Well, your heart, your mind, is the well of your life. If that is poisoned, your best life will die. And the Book that bids you guard it well is not a stern book, but a kind, loving book, that wishes you well, and is your best friend.[2]

2. Keeping or guarding is plainly imperative, because there is an outer world which appeals to our needs and desires, irrespective altogether of right and wrong, and of the moral consequences

[1] C. Jerdan, *For the Lambs of the Flock*, 63.
[2] J. M. Gibbon, *In the Days of Youth*, 32.

of gratifying these. Put a loaf before a starving man, and his impulse will be to clutch and devour it, without regard to whether it is his or not. Show any of our animal propensities its appropriate food, and it asks no questions as to right or wrong, but is stirred to grasp its natural food. And even the higher and nobler parts of our nature are but too apt to seek their gratification without having the licence of conscience for doing so, and sometimes in defiance of its plain prohibitions.

¶ Many telegraph wires run under and over our streets, over the mountains and under the oceans, coming from scenes of war and of peace, of industry and of learning, of sorrow and of joy, each carrying some swift current. And these wires are gathered at last into some central office of many clicking instruments. The operator translates these currents into intelligence, and sends them out in the form of messages of commerce, of war, of crime, or of love. So our five senses are main wires going out into the world about us, gathering observations, sensations, and experience from the streets of the city, the scenes of the country, the companions we meet, the books we read, the pictures at which we look. Another wire goes down, like an ocean cable, into the depths of our own nature, bringing up mysterious messages given by our own consciousness, speaking of God and good, of right and wrong, and of judgment to come. Thus there are wires from heaven above, on which God and good angels are sending messages; wires from hell below, on which the devil and his angels are sending suggestions, promptings; wires from men and women about us, conveying subtle trains of thought and of feeling. And the heart of man is the central office into which these wires run, pouring in there this raw material of thought-stuff.[1]

## III.

### The Keeper of the Heart.

1. The inherent weakness of all attempts at self-keeping is that, keeper and kept being one and the same personality, the more we need to be kept the less able we are to effect it. If in the very garrison there are traitors, how shall the fortress be defended? In order, then, to exercise an effectual guard over our characters and control over our natures, we must have an outward

[1] R. Mackenzie, *The Loom of Providence*, 248.

standard of right and wrong which shall not be deflected by variations in our temperature. We need a fixed light to steer towards, which is stable on the stable shore, and is not tossing up and down on our decks. We shall cleanse our way only when we "take heed thereto, according to thy word." For even God's viceroy within, the sovereign conscience, can be warped, perverted, silenced, and is not immune from the spreading infection of evil. When it turns to God, as a mirror to the sun, it is irradiated and flashes bright illumination into dark corners, but its power depends on its being thus lit by radiations from the very Light of Life. And if we are ever to have a coercive power over the rebellious powers within, we must have God's power breathed into us, giving grip and energy to all the good within, quickening every lofty desire, satisfying every aspiration that feels after Him, cowing all our evil and being the very self of ourselves.

¶ To know that God does not depend upon our feelings, but our feelings upon God, to know that we must claim a certain spiritual position as our right before we can realize it in our apprehensions, to be assured that we have the Spirit of God within us, and that He is distinct from all the emotions, energies, affections, sympathies in our minds, the only source and inspirer of them all, this is most necessary for us, the peculiar necessity, if I am not mistaken, of this age. The confidence of a power always at work within us, manifesting itself in our powerlessness, a love filling up our lovelessness, a wisdom surmounting our folly, the knowledge of our right to glory in this love, power, and wisdom, the certainty that we can do all righteous acts by submitting to this Righteous Being, and that we do them best when we walk in a line chosen for us, and not of our choosing, this is the strength surely, and nothing else, which carries us through earth and lifts us to heaven.[1]

2. The heart will not be satisfied till it is given to the highest and best. It demands a permanent investment for its affections; wealth, earthly ambition, the happiness that comes from without are only a loan at the best, and capital and interest will be demanded at death. The heart demands something substantial; glory, praise, reputation are full of promise till they are ours; and then, a last year's nest, out of which the bird has flown! In one

[1] *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, i. 246.

word, the heart demands a person greater, nobler, purer, stronger than itself, in whose affections and favour it can live and move and have its being; and God, as revealed in His Son Jesus Christ, is the only One whose nature is great enough to environ the soul with perfect peace and feed it with unfailing strength, in whose favour is life, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.

¶ The wise Augustine, who, after many wild wanderings, in which he had drained the fountain of knowledge, and quaffed to the dregs the cup of earthly delights, and given himself to every device by which the libertine and the fool endeavour to slake their souls at the salt pools of death, came back to God, like a bird to its forsaken nest, and said, "O Lord, broken is our heart and unquiet, and full of sorrow it must be, till it finds rest in Thee!"[1]

¶ "I wish you would change my heart," said the chief Sekomi to Livingstone, "Give me medicine to change it, for it is proud, proud and angry, angry always." He would not hear of the New Testament way of changing the heart; he wanted an outward, mechanical way—and that way was not to be found.[2]

3. That Divine Power is exerted for our keeping on condition of our trusting ourselves to Him and trusting Him for ourselves. And that condition is no arbitrary one, but is prescribed by the very nature of Divine help and of human faith. If God could keep our souls without our trust in Him, He would. He does so keep them as far as is possible, but for all the choicer blessings of His giving, and especially for that of keeping us free from the domination of our lower selves, there must be in us faith, if there is to be in God help. The hand that lays hold on God in Christ must be stretched out and must grasp His warm, gentle, and strong hand, if the tingling touch of it is to infuse strength. If the relieving force is victoriously to enter our hearts, we must throw open the gates and welcome it. Faith is but the open door for God's entrance. It has no efficacy in itself any more than a door has, but all its blessedness depends on what it admits into the hidden chambers of the heart.

¶ "To conquer," said Napoleon, "you must replace." You cannot expel bad thoughts by no thoughts. "Whatsoever things

[1] E. Griffith-Jones, in *Comradeship and Character*, 261.
[2] R. F. Horton, *The Book of Proverbs*, 58.

are pure, think on *these things.*" One thought there is which above all others is fruitful and powerful, and which should be familiar to every tempted Christian soul; it is the thought of the Cross and of Christ Crucified. "*In hoc signo vinces.*" David slew the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, but the sling was ready in his hand, and foresight had caused him to fill the bag with stones out of the brook. To the soul which fights the faithful battle in the realm of thought, and cries aloud in the darkness of its night to Christ Crucified, what wondrous light and power are given by the merits of the Cross and Passion.

Here is the heart's true bulwark found!
And here is rest secure;
And here is love's most certain ground,
And here salvation sure.[1]

¶ O how well he is guarded and armed against the snares of the devil and evil thoughts and impure imaginations, who has the image of the Crucified fixed in his heart, penetrating all his interior: and always and everywhere urging to the thought and performance of every good! Then inwardly consoled with wondrous sweetness of heart from the presence of Christ shall he be able justly to say, what holy David with great joy sang to God: "I have run the way of thy commandments; when thou didst enlarge my heart."[2]

[1] *The Lenten Collects*, 33.

[2] Thomas à Kempis, *Sermons to the Novices Regular*, 76.

# Wronging the Soul.

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## WRONGING THE SOUL.

**He that sinneth against me [misseth me—R.V. marg.] wrongeth his own soul:**
**All they that hate me love death.—Prov. viii. 36.**

THIS is represented as the language of Wisdom. The attribute of wisdom is personified throughout the chapter, which closes its instructions with the declaration of the text: "He that sinneth against me (or misseth me) wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death." The theme, then, is obviously the wrong which the sinner does to himself, to his nature, to his own soul.

He does a wrong, indeed, to others. He does them, it may be, deep and heinous injury. The moral offender injures society, and injures it in the most vital part. Sin is, to all the dearest interests of society, a desolating power. It spreads misery through the world. It brings that misery into the daily lot of millions. The violence of anger, the exactions of selfishness, the corrodings of envy, the coldness of distrust, the contests of pride, the excesses of passion, the indulgences of sense, carry desolation into the very bosom of domestic life; and the crushed and bleeding hearts of friends and kindred, or of a larger circle of the suffering and oppressed, are everywhere witnesses to, and victims of, the sinner's folly.

But all the injury, great and terrible as it is, which the sinner does or can inflict upon others is not equal to the injury that he inflicts upon himself. The evil that he does is, in almost all cases, the greater, the nearer it comes to himself; greater to his friends than to society at large; greater to his family than to his friends; and so it is greater to himself than to any other. Yes, it is in his own nature, whose glorious traits are dimmed and almost blotted out, whose pleading remonstrances are sternly disregarded, whose immortal hopes are rudely stricken down,—it is in his own nature

that he does a work so dark and mournful, and so fearful, that he ought to shudder and weep to think of it.

## I.

### The Sin against Wisdom.

The Hebrew term rendered "he that sinneth against me," means literally, "he who misses me," who fails to "hit," to find me and to hearken to me. The Greek word used in the Septuagint has reference to an archer who misses his object, and of the arrow that fails to hit the mark. In the text "missing" is a true antithesis to finding. The Arabic reads it much in this sense: "he who errs from me."

1. There are various definitions of sin, each one of which is true according to our standpoint. If we regard sin as a violation of man's true destiny, which we recognize not only in God's loving command, but also in the very law of man's own being, then sin is the transgressing of the law. If we regard sin as variation from the right, the good, the true, then sin is unrighteousness. If we regard sin as the negation of man's true nature as a spiritual being, and the identifying of him with the things of sense, then sin is materialism. If we regard sin as the fixing of the affections —affections that were intended for glories beyond the stars—upon the perishing things of this world, then sin is worldliness. And finally, if we regard sin as the failure or refusal of the soul to apprehend and confide in the unseen, then sin is unbelief. In the sphere of law, then, sin is transgression; in the sphere of morals, it is unrighteousness; in the sphere of thought, it is materialism; in the sphere of conduct, it is worldliness; in the sphere of spiritual apprehension, it is unbelief. But it is always one and the self-same thing, the same grim and ghastly thing—in the godless man of the world and in the ruffian who outrages law, in the smooth libertine and in the vulgar thief, in the respectable atheist who says there is no God, and in the brave outlaw who lives his creed and acts upon his belief.

¶ If all trees were clerks and all their branches pens, and all the hills books, and all the waters ink, yet all would not

sufficiently declare the evil that sin hath done. For sin has made this house of heavenly light to be a den of darkness; this house of joy to be a house of mourning, lamentation, and woe; this house of all refreshment to be full of hunger and thirst; this abode of love to be a prison of enmity and ill-will; this seat of meekness to be the haunt of pride and rage and malice. For laughter sin has brought horror; for munificence, beggary; and for heaven, hell. Oh, thou miserable man, turn convert. For the Father stretches out both His hands to thee. Do but turn to Him and He will receive and embrace thee in His love.[1]

2. Sin is here represented as a missing of wisdom.

(1) Wisdom is frequently spoken of in the Book of Proverbs as mere prudential morality, the discretion which life teaches or should teach, the sagacity in dealing with affairs, the knowledge of men and things that comes from experience. As many of the Proverbs show, wisdom means what we call common sense, and is opposed to folly, the stupid disregard of facts, the dulness of mind that will not learn the lessons that are patent on the very face of life. Thus, the book has many practical exhortations as to what to do in the ordinary problems that emerge every day, exhortations whose tone grows solemn and impressive as it warns against gluttony and drunkenness and the undue regard of wealth and kindred mistakes, even condescending to give advice about becoming surety for another. It is a sort of prudential morality, which experience loudly teaches to all who are not deaf.

To this wisdom, necessary though it is to all in some degree, we could only partially apply the words of the text, "He that misseth me wrongeth his own soul." We are all sufficiently alive, at least in theory, to the necessity for such wisdom. Men are trained in some fashion to acquire it; and most of us do gain some knowledge of men and affairs. We all undergo the education which informs us of things, and fills our heads with facts and distinctions in varying degrees of usefulness or uselessness. It is quite true that to miss this worldly wisdom which life should teach is to wrong one's own self. To have the means of knowledge in our hands and before our eyes and yet not to know, to have gone through life with our minds sealed, is to do despite to our own nature. To be incorrigible, unteachable, is to

[1] Jacob Behmen.

be (as the proverbs again and again declare) brutish, like the fool with folly so ingrained that though he were brayed in a mortar with a pestle yet will not his folly depart from him. "He that misseth me," says Wisdom as a guide of practical conduct, "wrongeth his own self."

¶ Prudence is a virtue of the practical reason, which not only enables a man to know in concrete circumstances what means are best to take to a good end, but also inclines a man to take those means with promptitude. Prudence resides in the intellect, not in the will, for its acts are intellectual acts. By prudence we inquire about, examine, and direct ourselves to the adoption of the proper means to a desired end. Modern philosophy has done much to bring the virtue of prudence into contempt by representing it as exclusively a selfish virtue—a virtue by which each man seeks to secure his own greatest happiness. But prudence no more exclusively concerns the individual's happiness than do the other virtues. For there is a prudence that prescribes the right means to the family good or general good, as well as that which secures one's own personal good. However, when used without qualification, the word "prudence" has always been understood as appertaining to the individual good only.[1]

(2) But wisdom as used in this book has a deeper meaning, which underlies all the practical counsels. Wisdom is looked on as identical with the law of God. It is the discernment that looks beneath the surface and sees cause and effect; looks into the heart of things and gets sane and true views of life, putting everything into correct perspective—a guide of the heart as well as of the feet, a guide for thought and feeling as well as for conduct. In this deeper sense it teaches morals and religion. Its very beginning is in the fear of God, reverence for the good and the high. It deals with the moral basis of life, and looks upon evil, not simply as *mistake* which a wise man would avoid, but as *sin* which perverts and depraves the very nature. This inner, deeper wisdom judges human nature and human conduct by the religious ideal set forth in the law of God. It probes down to the causes which produce such tragic failure in the lives of men. It sees that life is built on law; so that to break law is not merely folly that incurs punishment from the outside as by some machine that regulates all things, but is to break the law of

[1] M. Cronin, *The Science of Ethics.*

our own life and sin against our own nature and wrong our own self.

This sense of the word as the law of God is that in which the Psalmist prayed, "Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom," that we may learn not worldly wisdom but *wisdom*, the true meaning and purport and duty and destiny of life. Wisdom like this delights in displaying the fitness of what is good in the scheme of history and nature, pointing to a moral design both in human society and in the world at large.

¶ At first sight, on a cursory reading of the early chapters of this Book of Proverbs, it may seem as if all that was meant by Wisdom was a shrewd earthly common sense and worldly prudence. But look a little closer, and you will see that the Wisdom spoken of in all these chapters is closely connected not only with clearness of the well-furnished head, but with uprightness of the heart. It is not an intellectual excellence only (though it is that) which the author of the book commends; it is a moral excellence as well. The Wisdom that he speaks about is Wisdom that has rectitude for an essential part of it, the fibre of its very being is righteousness and holiness. Ay, there is no true wisdom which does not rest calmly upon a basis of truthfulness of heart, and is not guarded and nurtured by righteousness and purity of life. Man is one—one and indissoluble. The intellect and the conscience are but two names for diverse parts of the one human being, or rather they are but two names for diverse workings of the one immortal soul. And though it be possible that a man may be enriched with all earthly knowledge, whilst his heart is the dwelling-place of all corruption; and that, on the other hand, a man may be pure and upright in heart, whilst his head is very poorly furnished and his understanding very weak—yet these exceptional cases do not touch the great central truth, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Here, then, is the first outline of this fair form that rises before you—a Wisdom satisfying and entire for all the understanding, and not a dry, hard, abstract Wisdom either, but one which is all glowing with light and purity, and is guidance for the will, and cleansing for the conscience, and strength for the practical life: wisdom which is morality and righteousness; morality and righteousness which is the highest wisdom.[1]

[1] A. Maclaren, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, i. 298.

(3) Wisdom is raised at length in this book to the highest level when it is clothed with personal attributes and made almost identical with God. As being the quality which God displays in all His works, and being the root-principle of the world, it is spoken of (in words that glow and catch fire) as a glorious personality, the firstfruits of God's creative work, the very firstborn of creation, not only presiding over the fortunes of men and disposing of human destiny, but aiding God in creation, the Divine Wisdom set up from everlasting, from the beginning or ever the earth was. It is in this sense, as Wisdom personified, that the word is used in this chapter, which one who speaks with authority calls one of the most remarkable and beautiful things in Hebrew literature. We can understand how the Fathers of the Christian Church used this passage to illustrate their thought about Christ, the Logos, the Word of God, the incarnate wisdom and love and righteousness of God, the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature, who is before all things and by whom all things consist; and we can see how they should apply to Christ the beautiful words of this passage, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. Whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord."[1]

> Nay, falter not; 'tis your assurèd good
> To seek the noblest; 'tis your *only* good,
> Now you have seen it; for that higher vision
> Poisons all meaner choice for evermore.

## II.

### The Reaction of Sin in the Soul.

"He that misseth me wrongeth his own soul." He that does not take Me into account, ignores Me, leaves Me out of his practical creed and obedience, has done an immense injustice to himself. He that misses Me has missed the mark, missed the prize of existence.

To miss the wisdom that cometh from above, to fail to recognize the true relationship between life and the universal law of God, is indeed to wrong ourselves. It is to belittle man and do

[1] T. C. Finlayson, *The Divine Gentleness*, 304.

dishonour to human nature. To believe it in any sense true of wisdom that

She doth preserve the stars from wrong,
And the most ancient heavens by her are fresh and strong,

and to deny that that same law has meaning and purpose in human life, is to make the whole universe a hideous dance of unreason.

And if without this faith there seems no foothold for intellect, still less is there for morals. To be men in all that hitherto has stood for manhood at its best, we must believe that our moral life is related to a moral law which is rooted in the very nature of things; we must believe that man is so related to God that the will of God, the law of God, is the law of our own life, and that to miss this, to sin against this, is to destroy ourselves. This is why, according to the Bible, sin is among other things foolishness, insensate folly, a mad choice of death. To break the commandments is not merely to break a system of rules arbitrarily imposed on us from without, but is to sin against ourselves, and to ruin our own true happiness, to dim the radiance of our own souls, and to desecrate our own life.

¶ Ruskin was never weary of telling that, whatever faults an artist may have, they are always reproduced in his work. He declares that the fumes of wine and the stain of sensuality mentally leave dark shadows upon the artist's masterpiece. He cannot indulge his lower nature without in some degree clouding and marring his genius. But if everybody can see that in a man's physique and in a man's genius, is it not just as certain that sin will spoil a man's lordlier self, his moral and spiritual being? A man can never commit a transgression but it has blinded the eyes of his spiritual understanding. A man never violates a commandment of God but he has done an injustice to his conscience.[1]

1. Sin introduces an element of disorder, of discord, and of disease into our life. It is a violation of our nature, a refusal to follow the light and to obey the highest. It destroys the inner harmony. It throws us out of accord with the central music of the universe. We pray, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Heaven is heaven because that highest will is done there. Heaven is begun below when the will of God is done.

[1] W. L. Watkinson.

The religion of Jesus Christ holds as its chief power the secret of making duty a delight. Man finds his highest and noblest sphere of activity in doing the will of God; and love for that will transforms the man, gives all his powers their proper outlet, and makes for their perfection. To stand outside that central will is to wrong our souls and to mar our lives. Christ is seeking to gather all into Himself, and to stand outside that Divine unity is to stultify ourselves and thwart God. To dash into the rapids above the falls is to court inevitable destruction, and to throw ourselves athwart the known will of God is self-murder.

¶ Even our narrow experience of the universe presented one obtrusive fact which seemed to contradict the theistic presupposition of Omnipotent Goodness. The contingently presented universe of experience, which philosophy tries to reduce to rational unity, consists of unconscious things and self-conscious persons. *Things* are believed to evolve in natural order, which is thus virtually divine language; and this divine language of things is (so far) scientifically interpretable by persons. But *persons* themselves—at least on this planet—seem to be naturally evolved in moral disorder, and to live in a chaos of suffering. Pain, the supposed consequence of moral disorder, seems to be unfairly distributed. The constant order of insentient *things* is in striking contrast to the moral disorder that appears among living *persons*. *What ought not to be*, is commonly found in them. Analogous irregularity is not seen among things; which are all found punctually obeying their natural, yet supernatural, laws—and *they* are not expected to involve us at last in intellectual disorder. The material world of things does not put us to final confusion, although most of its phenomena remain uninterpreted, or inadequately interpreted. But the world of persons seems to be continually putting us to moral confusion, by its strangely chaotic appearances.[1]

2. Sin impairs the moral sense, and relaxes the spiritual fibre, taking away with it the bloom of the soul. All observation and all experience prove that this is its immediate, unvarying, inevitable effect. He who once yields to do wrong will find it harder the next time to do right, until he speedily becomes powerless to choose good and resist evil. The moral sense, which at first is quick to discriminate, begins under the pressure of sin, to lose the keenness of perception. The high sense of honour and of truthful-

[1] A. Campbell Fraser, *Biographia Philosophica*, 306.

ness is dulled. The good seems to be less good, and the evil does not seem to be so very evil, until at last that soul calls evil good and good evil. Such a desperate degradation is not reached all at once,—not till years of sin, it may be, and of indulgence have passed by. But let the soul remember that the first sin is the first step, and that the next will be easier, and that with each succeeding sin the momentum increases at a fearful rate until its speed shall hurl it down to ruin.

¶ It is related that in certain parts in South America it used to be the practice to drug with opium the coolies brought to work there, in order to make them oblivious to their wretched surroundings, and their arduous tasks. It is possible with the opiates of sin, of small sins as we call them if you will, gradually to dose our souls into a state of callous indifference to great moral and spiritual issues, so that it becomes possible to stand upon the very brink of ruin and not to realize it. What once would have appalled and shocked with a great horror is looked upon with indifference, or perhaps practised with complacency.[1]

¶ Meissonier, the great artist, had a very delicate hand, and he used to take great care of it, so much so that he had it shampooed every morning, and in driving always wore thick gloves. He was always watchful that he should not impair this marvellous suppleness and dexterity. Well, if a man thinks it necessary to take all that care of his hand that it may retain its sensitiveness and masterliness, how careful you ought to be of that diviner faculty inside by which you discriminate in the great questions of character and conduct. In short, no man commits a sin but the conscience that records it is injured, it has lost some of its discriminateness, some of its sensibility, some of its force. A man never sins but he has injured his will.[2]

3. To turn our back on wisdom is to love death. Sin is not only foolishness: it is suicide, self-inflicted wrong, killing the man in us, pouring out the very blood of our life. To have lived and with all our getting to have missed wisdom, to have missed the blessedness of accord with God's holy law, is failure. And in all the world's sore tragedy there is no failure so tragic as this. As the years pass by us, and the shadows gather round us, we look back, and the keenest sting is the thought of what we have *missed* by the way, what we might have been and done and received, and

[1] R. Mackintosh. [2] W. L. Watkinson.

failed to be or do or get. When we have given way to passion or evil desire, when we have sinned against conscience or heart, when we have slid down to lower levels of thought and life, how we have wronged ourselves! No enemy hath done this, but we ourselves. Fools! we have been our own worst enemy. "So foolish was I, I was as a beast before thee." Folly! It is madness. "He that misseth me" (wisdom, the eternal law of all living) "wrongeth his own soul. All that hate me love death."

¶ Charlotte Brontë writes thus to her literary friend and adviser Mr. W. S. Williams, a few days after the death of her brother Branwell, who passed away at the gloomy Haworth Parsonage, in September, 1848, a dissolute wreck—the victim, at the age of 31, of opium, strong drink, and debauchery: "'We have buried our dead out of our sight.' A lull begins to succeed the gloomy tumult of last week. It is not permitted us to grieve for him who is gone as others grieve for those they lose. The removal of our only brother must necessarily be regarded by us rather in the light of a mercy than a chastisement. Branwell was his father's and his sisters' pride and hope in boyhood, but since manhood the case has been otherwise. It has been our lot to see him take a wrong bent; to hope, expect, wait his return to the right path; to know the sickness of hope deferred, the dismay of prayer baffled; to experience despair at last and now to behold the sudden early obscure close of what might have been a noble career. I do not weep from a sense of bereavement—there is no prop withdrawn, no consolation torn away, no dear companion lost—but for the wreck of talent, the ruin of promise, the untimely dreary extinction of what might have been a burning and a shining light. My brother was a year my junior. I had aspirations and ambitions for him once, long ago—they have perished mournfully. Nothing remains of him but a memory of errors and sufferings. There is such a bitterness of pity for his life and death, such a yearning for the emptiness of his whole existence as I cannot describe."[1]

¶ Professor Turner tells us in his most interesting book on astronomy that the astronomer uses mechanism of unspeakable delicacy. One day they allowed a visitor to come into the room; and the visitor gently touched one of the instruments with his finger. That was enough. It took months of painstaking and expensive work to correct that machine and make it once more

[1] C. K. Shorter, *The Brontës: Life and Letters*, i. 453.

register the signs of the sky. And I tell you that as one touch would destroy that astronomical mechanism, so an act, a thought, a word, a fancy may destroy the delicacy of the human soul, and put us out of fellowship with the sky above our head. He that sinneth against Me does injustice to his own personality, maims his own splendid faculties. That is the thing to look at—suicide, self-destruction, suicide of the soul.[1]

4. This would seem to be the worst degradation of all—that man should not only sin his intellect and will and conscience away, but that he should love his shame, that his soul should be enamoured of its degradation. And yet, who does not know that even this is the effect of sin? Through it men learn to love the base things of this world, and lose the power to love the nobler things. What is life to such a soul but shame? What shall death be but the beginning of an eternal bereavement? All its affections are fixed on things of sense. All its delights and all its joys are bound up with the pleasures of sense. And when death comes and strips off the pampered flesh, and the world, which alone it is able to love, fades away like the baseless fabric of a vision, what shall eternity be to that soul but an eternal bereavement of all that it is able to love, and therefore an eternal torture and an eternal death?

¶ A Buddhist story tells of a man who had lived wickedly and became very ill and nigh unto death. In the fever he had a dream, and in this dream he was conducted through the underworld to the hall of justice in which the judges sat in curtained alcoves. He came opposite his judge, and was told to write his misdeeds upon a slate provided for that purpose. Sentence was then passed that he should be thrice struck by lightning for his sins. The curtain was then drawn back, and he faced his judge, to find there seated the very image of himself, and he realized that he had pronounced the verdict. He had unconsciously judged himself. There is a word that says, "Be sure your sin will find you out," which some seem to think means "Be sure your sin will be found out." This of course is quite beside the mark. It points to a man's sin avenging itself, tracking down its victim and demanding its pound of flesh. So "Be sure your sin will find *you* out," with emphasis upon the *you*. "He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul." There is no escape from it.[2]

[1] W. L. Watkinson. [2] R. Mackintosh.

Though no mortal e'er accused you,
Though no witness e'er confused you,
Though the darkness came and fell
Over even deeds of hell;

Though no sign nor any token
Spake of one commandment broken,
Though the world should praise and bless
And love add the fond caress,

Still your secret sin would find you,
Pass before your eyes to blind you,
Burn your heart with hidden shame,
Scar your cheek with guilty flame.

Sin was never sinned in vain,
It could always count its slain;
You yourself must witness be
To your own soul's treachery.

# The Winning of Souls.

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## The Winning of Souls.

**He that is wise winneth souls.—Prov. xi. 30.**

1. There is a striking difference between the translation as given above from the Revised Version and that with which we are more familiar in the Authorized Version. The clause ran formerly, "He that winneth souls is wise." Thus rendered its meaning was not very clear, and was rather suggestive of credit laid to a man's account for winning souls. But the transposing of the sentence in the Revised Version gives a much more illuminating thought, at the same time carrying out the idea contained in the preceding clause of the verse. "He that is wise winneth souls." Does not this imply that the man who is walking in the true wisdom shall win souls, not by specific effort directed to that end or from thought of credit or reward, but as a consequence, a natural result, of the influence of his character and life? We are reminded of our Lord's picture-lesson of a lamp placed on the stand which "shineth unto all that are in the house." "Even so," He says, "let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

2. In the New Testament we find the Apostle James, with whom religion is nothing if not practical, beautifully describing the true wisdom. "Who is wise and understanding among you? let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom." Here again the Revised Version is more telling in its simple directness, and the whole passage strikingly bears out the thought under consideration. The Apostle goes on to say that if there are bitter feelings and jealousy in the heart this wisdom is *not* a wisdom that comes from above, but is earthly and animal. "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy. And the *fruit of righteousness* is

sown in peace by them that make peace" (Jas. iii. 13–18). Here we are brought back to our starting-point in Proverbs, "the fruit of the righteous!" The "good life," the daily walk in meekness of wisdom—it is this that is full of good fruit and becomes a *tree of life*. The fruit scattered brings forth fruit in other lives, and souls are attracted by its beauty. A tree of life must impart nourishment and health and joy to all who come into contact with it. In the Apocalypse we read of the tree of life whose "leaves were for the healing of the nations" (Rev. xxii. 2). If our lives were thus fragrant, shedding peace and love around, should we not prove in our experience the truth of the saying, "He that is wise winneth souls"?

## I.

### The Value of the Soul.

1. The value of a thing depends upon its intrinsic worth; upon what it costs of time, labour, sacrifice, and means to secure it. For gold man leaves home, loved ones, and native land, sails over seas, crosses continents, overleaps yawning chasms, climbs dizzy mountains, digs and delves in storm, heat, and cold, faces perils, famine, and sword to reach the El Dorado of his fond hopes. For the precious diamond he passes through the same rough experience, satisfied only when he snatches from the depths of a Golconda the Koh-i-noor which in time flashes from the jewelled hand of a princess, or the golden crown of a king. But gold and diamonds and political preferment and professional glory are not all there is in this world: they are only the things of a day that perish with the using. Put all material things, known and unknown, in the one scale, and the immortal soul of man in the other, and what is the result? The spiritual outweighs the material!

¶ During the World's Fair in Chicago there was one place in the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building—in the Tiffany exhibit—that one could never approach, day or night, when the building was open because of the great crowd gathered around it. I was there time and time and time again, but never could I get at the place; I always had to stand on tiptoe and look over the

heads of the crowd. What were they looking at? Nothing but a cone of purple velvet revolving upon an axis, and toward the apex of the cone a large, beautiful diamond of almost priceless worth. It was well worth looking at. But I have never recalled that scene but the thought has come to me that the single soul of the raggedest pauper on the streets, of the most degraded woman, of the most ignorant boy or girl on the street is of infinitely more value in God's sight than ten thousand gems like that.[1]

2. But there is another and truer method by which to determine the soul's value—God's estimate. The real worth of anything depends on what the one knowing its value is willing to pay for it. He who created the soul knew its worth, and so in exchange gave His only begotten Son. The redemptive price paid, "not with corruptible things as silver and gold," was "the precious blood of Christ," the highest gift and the brightest glory that Heaven could afford. To win souls, then, should be the animating principle underlying the work of the Christian in pulpit or pew. Soul-winning should be the ruling passion of our lives, and the highest ideal of the most ambitious religious zealot. Indeed, it is the sum total of all wisdom. "He that is wise winneth souls."

¶ Some years ago in Salt Rapids, Minnesota, two farmer brothers were digging a well. The one was down in the well with a bucket, and the other at the top with the windlass. The man who was digging down in the well struck a quicksand, and the sand commenced to pour into it. Fortunately there was a good broad plank down in the well, and the man at the bottom got underneath that plank, but the sand silted in from every side. His brother at the top could hear his voice, and knew that he was living. He sent word out for help, and from all over the township the townspeople gathered at the mouth of the well to try and dig the man out. They dug on throughout the day, and at night torches were brought, and in relays through the long night all the men in the township worked on and on, digging out the sand as it kept pouring in, and before dawn they succeeded in getting the man out. I afterwards saw him alive and well. A whole township working all night to dig out one man, to save one life! Was it worth while? I say it was. And Christ dug very deep to save our souls.[2]

[1] R. A. Torrey. [2] *Ibid.*

## II.

### The Way to Win Souls.

1. What is meant by winning souls? To the writer of the text, we may be quite sure, the soul meant nothing less than the entire individuality, with all its faculties, and whoever would win souls, as he understood the term, would have to address himself to the whole man or woman, not to some rarefied, ethereal, intangible part of their being. To win a human being is, we may take it, tantamount to winning him over to some point of view, to a certain resolution, to make him take his stand on a certain side. Now, we all know what is meant by a winning manner—how often we have envied the fortunate individuals who seemed naturally endowed with that gift, who could state their case and advance their claims in a way it was difficult to resist, who could make you do things without hurting your feelings, convincing you somehow that those were the right things to do, though you had not thought so previously! Some one else may urge just the same course of action on you, but his manner, his very tone, has an aggressive quality which rasps you, ruffles you, rouses your opposition, and he fails to carry you with him, however cogent his arguments may be. Now souls—men and women—have to be *won*, not hustled, not coerced, not threatened. The appeal even of religion, however majestic, must respect man's reason, and not seek to carry the inviolable sanctuary of the soul by force; no one has ever yet been driven into heaven as into a sort of concentration camp, at the point of the bayonet or the crack of the whip, and He who understood the human soul as no one else has ever done used the note of appeal rather than of command or menace. Soul-winning—the influencing of men and women for the better—which is not first and last persuasive is a contradiction in terms.

(1) The word "win" is used in *warfare*. Warriors win cities and provinces. Now, to win a soul is a much more difficult thing than to win a city. Observe the earnest soul-winner at his work; how cautiously he seeks his great Captain's directions to know when to hang out the white flag to invite the heart to surrender to the sweet love of a dying Saviour; when, at the proper time,

to hang out the black flag of threatening, showing that, if grace be not received, judgment will surely follow; and when to unfurl, with dread reluctance, the red flag of the terrors of God against stubborn, impenitent souls. The soul-winner has to sit down before a soul as a great captain before a walled town; to draw his lines of circumvallation, to cast up his entrenchments, and to fix his batteries. He must not advance too fast, or he may overdo the fighting; he must not move too slowly, or he may not seem to be in earnest, and may thus do mischief. Then he must know which gate to attack, how to plant his guns at Ear-gate, and how to discharge them; how, sometimes, to keep the batteries going, day and night, with red-hot shot, if perhaps he may make a breach in the walls; at other times, to lie by and cease firing, and then, on a sudden, to open all the batteries with terrific violence, if peradventure he may take the soul by surprise, or cast in a truth when it was not expected, to burst like a shell in the soul, and do damage to the dominions of sin.

¶ The Christian soldier must know how to advance by little and little—to sap that prejudice, to undermine that old enmity, to blow into the air that lust, and at the last, to storm the citadel. It is his to throw the scaling ladder up, and to have his ears gladdened as he hears a clicking on the wall of the heart, telling that the scaling ladder has grasped and has gained firm hold; and then, with his sabre between his teeth, to climb up, spring on the man, slay his unbelief in the name of God, capture the city, run up the blood-red flag of the cross of Christ, and say, "The heart is won, won for Christ at last." This needs a warrior well-trained, a master in his art. After many days' attack, many weeks of waiting, many an hour of storming by prayer and battering by entreaty, to carry the Malakoff of depravity,—this is the work, this is the difficulty. It takes no fool to do this. God's grace must make a man wise thus to capture Mansoul, to lead its captivity captive, and open wide the heart's gates that the Prince Immanuel may come in. This is winning a soul.[1]

(2) We use the word in *love-making*. We speak of the bridegroom who wins his bride. There are secret and mysterious ways by which those who love win the object of their affection, which are wise in their fitness to the purpose. The weapon of this warfare is not always the same, yet where that victory is won the

[1] C. H. Spurgeon, *The Soul-Winner*, 254.

wisdom of the means becomes clear to every eye. The weapon of love is sometimes a look, or a soft word whispered and eagerly listened to; sometimes it is a tear; but this I know, that we have, most of us in our turn, cast around another heart a chain which that other would not care to break, and which has linked us twain in a blessed captivity which has cheered our life. Yes, and that is very nearly the way in which we have to save souls. That illustration is nearer the mark than any of the others. Love is the true way of soul-winning, for when we speak of storming the walls, and when we speak of wrestling, those are but metaphors, but this is near the fact. We win by love.

¶ I believe that much of the secret of soul-winning lies in having bowels of compassion, in having spirits that can be touched with the feeling of human infirmities. Carve a preacher out of granite, and even if you give him an angel's tongue, he will convert nobody. Put him into the most fashionable pulpit, make his elocution faultless, and his matter profoundly orthodox, but, so long as he bears within his bosom a hard heart, he can never win a soul. Soul-saving requires a heart that beats hard against the ribs. It requires a soul full of the milk of human kindness; this is the *sine qua non* of success.[1]

2. What is this wisdom that wins souls? It is the wisdom not of the schools, but of the heart. It comes from experience and sympathetic insight. The Hebrew word for "winneth" may also be rendered "taketh" and with this we may compare Christ's promise to His disciples that they should "catch men" (Luke v. 10). This suggests the art of fishing or bird-catching. We must have our lures for souls, adapted to attract, to fascinate, to grasp. We must go forth with our bird-lime, our decoys, our nets, our baits, so that we may but catch the souls of men. Their enemy is a fowler possessed of the basest and most astounding cunning; we must outwit him with the guile of honesty, the craft of grace. But the art is to be learned only by Divine teaching, and herein we must be wise and willing to learn.

¶ Washington Irving tells us of some three gentlemen who had read in Izaak Walton all about the delights of fishing. So they must needs enter upon the same amusement, and accordingly they

[1] C. H. Spurgeon, *The Soul-Winner*, 256.

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(1) We must be wise first of all, in the grand old Scripture sense of the word; we are to be good. The successful winner of souls must himself have found the truth. This is what the first clause of the verse asserts. "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life." The fruit of the righteous—that is to say, his life—is not a thing fastened upon him, but it grows out of him. It is not a garment which he puts off and on, but is inseparable from himself. The sincere man's religion is the man himself, not a cloak for his concealment. True godliness is the natural outgrowth of a renewed nature, not the forced growth of pious hothouse excitement. Is it not natural for a vine to bear clusters of grapes? natural for a palm tree to bear dates? Certainly as natural as it is for the apples of Sodom to be found on the trees of Sodom, and for noxious plants to produce poisonous berries. When God gives a new nature to His people, the life which comes out of that new

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wisdom of the means becomes clear to every eye. The weapon of love is sometimes a look, or a soft word whispered and eagerly listened to; sometimes it is a tear; but this I know, that we have, most of us in our turn, cast around another heart a chain which that other would not care to break, and which has linked us twain in a blessed captivity which has cheered our life. Yes, and that is very nearly the way in which we have to save souls. That illustration is nearer the mark than any of the others. Love is the true way of soul-winning, for when we speak of storming the walls, and when we speak of wrestling, those are but metaphors, but this is near the fact. We win by love.

¶ I believe that much of the secret of soul-winning lies in having bowels of compassion, in having spirits that can be touched with the feeling of human infirmities. Carve a preacher out of granite, and even if you give him an angel's tongue, he will convert nobody. Put him into the most fashionable pulpit, make his elocution faultless, and his matter profoundly orthodox, but, so long as he bears within his bosom a hard heart, he can never win a soul. Soul-saving requires a heart that beats hard against the ribs. It requires a soul full of the milk of human kindness; this is the *sine qua non* of success.[1]

2. What is this wisdom that wins souls? It is the wisdom not of the schools, but of the heart. It comes from experience and sympathetic insight. The Hebrew word for "winneth" may also be rendered "taketh" and with this we may compare Christ's promise to His disciples that they should "catch men" (Luke v. 10). This suggests the art of fishing or bird-catching. We must have our lures for souls, adapted to attract, to fascinate, to grasp. We must go forth with our bird-lime, our decoys, our nets, our baits, so that we may but catch the souls of men. Their enemy is a fowler possessed of the basest and most astounding cunning; we must outwit him with the guile of honesty, the craft of grace. But the art is to be learned only by Divine teaching, and herein we must be wise and willing to learn.

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to myself. There can be no true soul-winner who is not a pupil at the feet of Jesus.[1]

4. The successful winner of souls must rely less on his own wisdom and more on the wisdom of God. One of the principal qualifications of a great artist's brush must be its yielding itself up to him so that he can do what he likes with it. A harpist will love to play on one particular harp because he knows the instrument, and the instrument almost appears to know him. So, when God puts His hand upon the very strings of our being, and every power within us seems to respond to the movements of His hand, we are instruments that He can use. It is not easy to keep in that condition, to be in such a sensitive state that we receive the impression that the Holy Spirit desires to convey, and are influenced by Him at once.

¶ If there is a great ship out at sea, and there comes a tiny ripple on the waters, it is not moved by it in the least. Here comes a moderate wave, the vessel does not feel it. But look over the bulwarks; see those corks down there, if only a fly drops into the water, they feel the motion, and dance upon the tiny wave. May you be as mobile beneath the power of God as the cork is on the surface of the sea! For this self-surrender is one of the essential qualifications for one who is to be a winner of souls.[2]

My soul is drawn out to the hungry soul,
  But what have I to give, of wine or bread,
  Who hunger, thirst, myself, and scarce am fed,
So small my portion, and so scant my dole?

Is it enough that I should hold my cup
  To starving lips, and, with a touch divine,
  Wilt Thou transmute its water into wine,
To heavenly food the crumbs I offer up?

Oh Thou, compassionate, who on the rood
  Thyself, our mystic Bread and Wine didst spend,
  I and my brother low before Thee bend.
Fill Thou his soul—my hungry soul—with good.[3]

[1] A. Smellie, *In the Secret Place*, 9.
[2] C. H. Spurgeon, *The Soul-Winner*, 66.
[3] M. Blaikie, *Songs by the Way*, 47.

# The Sovereignty of Providence.

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## The Sovereignty of Providence.

**The lot is cast into the lap;**
**But the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.—Prov. xvi. 33.**

Sometimes lots are cast to refer the decision of a matter to what we call chance. When Jesus was crucified, the soldiers who were left on the ground to guard the cross divided His garments among themselves; and they seem actually to have gambled for His coat while He was hanging above them on the cross, dying for the sin of the world. They decided by a cast of the dice-box whose property it should become.

Devout men in ancient times also used the lot on occasions of special importance; but they did so in the fear of God, and as an act of worship. The practice was an appeal to the Divine judgment. The cast of the lot showed the Divine will. Thus on the great Day of Atonement in Israel the choice of the scapegoat was made by lot. The Twelve Tribes had their territories in the land of Canaan apportioned by lot. Saul was chosen by this method to be the first king of Israel. In this way Jonah was found out to be the cause of the storm upon the Great Sea. Matthias was selected by lot to fill the vacancy in the company of the Twelve Apostles. These are a few examples from the Bible of the solemn use of the lot on important occasions.

¶ In casting lots the Jews probably used stones which differed from one another in shape or colour. These were thrown together into the "lap," or loose fold, of a man's garment; and then they were shaken about so that there should be a perfect mixing of them, to prevent all preference of one stone over another on the part of the person who was to draw the lot.[1]

There are two thoughts in this old Hebrew proverb:

I. The Incalculableness of Life.

II. The Reliable Providence of God.

[1] C. Jerdan.

## I.

### The Lot.

**"The lot is cast into the lap."**

1. The drawing or casting of lots looks like an appeal to chance, for the result of the operation seems to depend upon chance. And our life in the world, to the outward view, often appears as if it were a lottery. People speak of being fortunate or unfortunate, lucky or unlucky. One says, "I had the good fortune to find him at home." Another says, "As ill luck would have it, he was not at home." The Roman general called to the pilot in the storm, "Fear not, you carry Cæsar and his fortune." Among the Romans, Fortuna was the goddess of luck, fate, or fortune. It used to be said of Oliver Cromwell that he had his lucky days. And how few are there who do not recognize chances in life, events of great moment which seem to come upon them quite fortuitously?

¶ Have you ever, in a collected hour, and aided by a good memory, gone over the events of your own life—gone over them in some little detail? To many people there comes at some time either a period of enforced inactivity, or some critical juncture, which makes their thoughts range over the past, turning its yellowed leaves, stopping a little here and sighing a little there, with now a half-sad smile and now a sharp twinge of regret, and once or twice the recollection of a great joy which even yet sheds its radiance over the page. If you have ever indulged in such a survey, you must have been struck with one thing—the unexpectedness, the incalculableness of life, the utterly unforeseen and seemingly trifling circumstances that proved to be decisive, as a drop of water falling this side or that of the Great Divide will be carried to the Atlantic or Pacific Ocean.

Take, for instance, Luther and Loyola. What turned the former to a religious career—what caused him to enter the monastery from which he emerged to challenge the Pope—was a narrow escape from being struck by lightning; while what made Loyola from a soldier and courtier into the founder of the Jesuit order was the cannon ball which laid him low as he stood on the walls of Pampeluna. Men of iron will and mighty genius they both were, but the occasion, the impulse, which brought out their

genius and gave direction to their will, they neither created, nor foresaw, nor resisted. Think as highly as we will of our own initiative, of our power to deal with the materials life supplies us withal, the extent to which unforeseen circumstances have shaped our course must touch the most confident at times with a strange humility, and make him echo the old words, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."[1]

2. It cannot be denied that advantage or disadvantage often comes to a man, irrespective of his moral worth, of his native gifts, or of any equivalent he has rendered for it of industry and self-denial. Two youths, let us say, enter a business house about the same age, and at the same time. They are, as near as can be, equally matched in equipment to command success. In this respect there is little to choose between them. One begins entirely on his merits; he has no influence behind him to open doors before him as by some invisible hand. The other has influence; no matter what it is, or how it works, he has it, and it operates distinctly in his favour. A few years after, and the latter has far outdistanced the former in position, salary, and outlook. And the reason is not the capacity of either; it is the arbitrary advantage, the piece of luck, that one has had over the other from the start.

¶ A cloth-worker in Yorkshire, by carelessness or inadvertence, raises the nap of a given fabric a shade above the regulation height. He is dismissed, and the cloth is laid aside as spoiled. A French buyer comes into the place, and casting his eyes on it, instantly sees for it a future. That touch of heightened nap has done it. The manufacturer has his wits about him, and what a week before was a mistake is now a new and valuable design which, in a couple of years, makes for him what some of us would regard as a substantial fortune.[2]

3. The omnipresence of God and of law is not questioned But concurrent therewith there is human action, which is partly free and sometimes irrational. This gives luck its loophole, and at the same time prescribes its limits. Do we seriously believe that nothing irrational ever happens in the universe? Does everything happen in accord with God's plan for the world

[1] J. Warschauer, *The Way of Understanding*, 321.
[2] A. Shepherd, *Men in the Making*, 66.

Does fore-ordination account for all things? Is human freedom quite an illusion? Is it not merely conditioned by circumstances and by habit, is it really non-existent? All this and more must be asserted if we are to hold that law accounts for all and that luck is nowhere. Indeed, we shall abolish human responsibility and sin—in theory, at least. There is no choice but that between a mechanical world, absolutely ruled by fore-ordination, in which there is no spontaneity or moral possibility, and a world in which there is some chance, some luck. Human action, if at all free and if ever foolish and wrong, introduces an element into history which ensures that among all the unerring certainties of nature there shall mingle a little of the erratic and the whimsical. Man moves nature to produce many results. These must reflect the irrational in him, and must influence not only himself, but his fellows. Therefore we have luck, good and bad, in life. It would be simpler, and would save much confusion, if we could say without qualification all is law, everything happens as God ordains. But then things are not simple, and we must accept their complexities. This disturbing factor of luck must be reckoned with.

¶ Chance or Providence! Chance: or Wisdom—one with nature and man; reaching from end to end, through all time and all existence, orderly disposing all things, according to fixed periods—as he describes it, in terms very like certain well-known words of the book of Wisdom—those are the "fenced opposites" of the speculative dilemma, the tragic embarras, of which Aurelius cannot too often remind himself as the summary of man's situation in the world. If there be such a provident soul "behind the veil," truly, even to him, even in the most intimate of those conversations, it has never yet spoken with any quite irresistible assertion of its presence. Yet that speculative choice, as he has found it, is on the whole a matter of will—"'Tis in thy power," again, here too, "to think as thou wilt." And for his part he has made his choice, and is true to it.[1]

¶ I remember a small boy of six saying to his father, who was entertaining him with a tale, "God always knew—long before ever you were in the world—that you would make that up for me some day." Well, perhaps so; but did God also foreknow and foreordain that some hapless human being, as yet unborn, should some day commit such and such a crime, and suffer the

[1] Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*.

dire penalty for it? Are we really, in the Persian poet's phrase—

But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays
Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and Days;
Hither and thither moves, and checks and slays,
And one by one in the Closet lays?

In that case, shall we not have to continue in the same strain, and address Him thus—

O Thou who didst with Pitfall and with Gin
Beset the Path I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin?

If we believe in Providence to this full extent, are we not brought back to the conclusion that it is no use trying to be or do one thing rather than another, since we can be or do only what He ordains—and "who withstandeth his will"?[1]

## II.

### The Lord.

**"But the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."**

But now, let us see what the wise man says. Does he say that all that comes to us in life comes by chance? Does he say that any event whatever is wholly a matter of luck? On the contrary, he says that "the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Whatever we believe about the freedom of the will, we must believe that we are in the hands of God, and that just as much in the small as in the great things.

¶ Would the Eternal be so great as He is, if by reason of His greatness He necessarily lost sight of the little? Could the world justly be called a masterpiece of art if the same artist whose hand is visible in the vast did not also show itself in the minute? I never see one of those ancient cathedrals—where even the lowest edge of the groundsel is elaborated in the same spirit and with the same affectionate pains as the tower which shoots aloft into the heavens—without perceiving in it a likeness to the

[1] J. Warschauer, *The Way of Understanding*, 327.

work of the great Architect of the world. Here, too, it may be said—

> If imaged in the smallest part it be,
> You then the beauty of the whole will see.

No; He must be great in what is little as well as in what is large.

> The daisy on the mountain sod,
> Withdrawn from human view,
> Was planted by the hand of God,
> The hand that fashioned you.
>
> That flower His care protects whose call
> Did countless worlds create;
> By condescending to the small,
> He proves that He is great.[1]

1. This world cannot be the plaything of accident, because obviously it is not the outcome of accident. There is nothing chaotic, capricious, unreliable about the operations of the forces of nature. The millionth combination of the same chemical substances in the same proportions will yield the same result as the first. The eclipse predicted by astronomers for a certain date comes neither a day too soon nor a day too late. The filaments of all the thousand varieties of snow-crystals form angles of exactly 60 to 120 degrees, neither more nor less. That does not look like arbitrariness or want of control at the centre of things. But there is more than that. All we have learnt of the world's past history shows us not only order but purpose at work, a steady progress towards something more and better. What science calls evolution is only another term for the unceasing action of Providence on a cosmic scale, a deliberate working towards a foreseen and predetermined aim, the gradual unfolding of a vast and majestic design.

¶ Slowly but surely the old deistic theory of the world has been undermined. The one absolutely impossible conception of God, in the present day, is that which represents Him as an occasional Visitor. Science had pushed the deist's God farther and farther away, and at the moment when it seemed as if He would be thrust out altogether, Darwinism appeared, and, under the disguise of a foe, did the work of a friend. It has conferred

[1] A. Tholuck, *Hours of Christian Devotion*, 146.

upon philosophy and religion an inestimable benefit, by showing us that we must choose between two alternatives. Either God is everywhere present in nature, or He is nowhere. He cannot be here and not there. He cannot delegate His power to demigods called "second causes." In nature everything must be His work or nothing. We must frankly return to the Christian view of direct Divine agency, the immanence of Divine power in nature from end to end, the belief in a God in whom not only we but all things have their being, or we must banish Him altogether. It seems as if, in the providence of God, the mission of modern science was to bring home to our unmetaphysical ways of thinking the great truth of the Divine immanence in creation, which is not less essential to the Christian idea of God than to a philosophical view of nature. . . .

No doubt the evolution which was at first supposed to have destroyed teleology is found to be more saturated with teleology than the view which it superseded. And Christianity can take up the new as it did the old, and find in it a confirmation of its own belief. It is a great gain to have eliminated chance, to find science declaring that there must be a reason for everything, even when it cannot hazard a conjecture as to what the reason is.[1]

2. Every free action is surrounded by and dovetails into events absolutely determined by law. The presence of a man in the place where a flood happens, or his owning property there, may have a little chance in it. But the flood itself has a chain of causes which fully account for it. There may be some chance in the discovery of a gold-mine. But there was none in the formation of the gold or in its being deposited where it was found. That tree which fell so disastrously had the direction of its fall determined a century ago when it was bent as a sapling. Forces under law mingle with all that seems free, catch it up, and deal with its results. So that "nothing walks with aimless feet." God is constantly reducing even human life to order. As we develop there is found less and less of the incalculable in us. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." So are those of an evil man. Now to the extent to which human action becomes blessedly or cursedly automatic, to that extent chance is eliminated.

¶ When Napoleon was returning from Egypt to France, Nelson was on the watch for him, and even lay for a while with his whole fleet close to the two ships of the fugitive. A thick fog, however,

[1] Aubrey Moore, in *Lux Mundi*.

settled down between them; and had it not been for that fog, the state of the world would have been different from what it now is. In solemn grandeur the ancient avalanches lie couched on the icy mountain-tops, and repose from year to year, until, perhaps, the wing of a bird, as it flies quickly past, touches them, and by their fall some thousands of human beings lose their lives. It is true that little touches do not make great revolutions, and that as little do trivial incidents hinder them. It is true that the avalanche must have been accumulating for many a year if it was to destroy the city, and that Napoleon must have been the man he was if the fog was to change the condition of the world. Still the touch of the bird's wing and the curtain of fog were likewise necessary to bring about the issue.[1]

¶ Of all the old superstitious stories, I think one of the most interesting is that told by Cicero, because it not only illustrates the habit of mind, but throws a curious sidelight upon the pronunciation of Latin. He was at Brundisium, I think, about to start by sea for Greece. A vendor came along the quay, crying Caunean figs for sale. "Cauneas! Cauneas!" "Of course," said Cicero, "I decided at once not to go, and took measures accordingly." The fact is that Cauneas was the usual pronunciation—thus much is clear—of the Latin words, *Cave ne eas* ("Mind you don't go"). But the odd thing is that it does not seem to have occurred to Cicero to warn his fellow-passengers of the prognostication. He only considered it as a sign which he had been fortunate enough to be able to interpret. And this is very characteristic of the general attitude. Providence is regarded, not as a just dispenser of good and evil, but as powerless to avert a catastrophe, and only able to intimate to a favoured few, by very inadequate means, the disasters in store; and it is this that makes the whole thing into rather a degrading business, because it seems to imply that there is a whimsical and malicious spirit behind it all, that loves to disappoint and upset, and to play men ugly and uncomfortable tricks, like Caliban in Setebos.

Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.[2]

(1) God does not intervene in the detailed use we make of His gift of freedom—else were it not freedom at all. Our liberty is providentially bestowed, but not the employment we choose to make of it. It is foolish to charge Heaven with man's misdeeds, foolish to imagine that our sins and the evil we inflict upon ourselves

[1] A. Tholuck, *Hours of Christian Devotion*, 144.
[2] A. C. Benson, *Along the Road*, 165.

and each other lie at Heaven's door, or were fore-ordered by the Most High. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good," but He contents Himself with the showing: He asks for a free, not a forced, obedience, and holds us responsible for our choice. True, this gift of liberty involves much sorrow and suffering; but only by the exercise of free-will can character be formed, and we know that sorrow and suffering—while we would not choose them for their own sakes—have often and often been the means of bringing out the finer qualities of men and women.

¶ There are three great principles in life which weave its warp and woof, apparently incompatible with each other, yet they harmonize, and, in their blending, create this strange life of ours. The first is, our fate is in our own hands, and our blessedness or misery is the exact result of our own acts. The second is, "There is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will." The third is, "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong"; but time and chance happen(eth) to them all. Accident, human will, the shaping will of Deity: these things make up life. Or rather, perhaps, we see a threefold causality from some defect in our spiritual eyesight. Could we see as He sees, all would be referable to one principle which would contain them all; as the simple, single law of gravitation embraces the complex phenomena of the universe; and as, on the other hand, by pressing the eyeballs so as to destroy their united impression, you may see all things double.[1]

(2) And yet God does not let us go our own way; He stands aside, but only a little way aside, watching all the while, and holding the issue in His mighty hands. We cannot read history or individual experience without coming to the conclusion that here and there, unperceived at the time, but none the less real, was God's guiding, God's restraining influence. Some deep grief, which at the time almost crushes us, proves an inspiration; some pitiful tragedy which wrings our heart is the starting-point of triumph; our light affliction worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Mrs. Josephine Butler's loss of a beloved daughter makes her devote herself to the rescue of other mothers' daughters from a fate worse than death; John Brown is shot at Harper's Ferry for his anti-slavery principles, but his soul goes marching on, and his memory serves to win liberty for the slaves

[1] *Life and Letters of the Rev. F. W. Robertson*, 243.

of America; Jesus is nailed to a shameful cross, and that cross becomes the power of God unto salvation.

¶ "Unless the hairs of your head are all numbered there is no God." The words are George MacDonald's, and they put the challenge to faith in its clearest and boldest form. We all want to believe that our hairs are numbered; that we are the objects of a special loving care. We feel with Michelet: "Let the sentiment of the loving cause disappear, and it is over with me. If I have no longer the happiness of feeling this world to be loved, of feeling myself to be loved, I can no longer live. Hide me in the tomb." Yes, the hairs of our head are all numbered. Whenever we pray we affirm that. And we can match this affirmation, in our being's highest act, against all the materialisms and all the devil's advocacies, from whatever quarter they come. For the soul here is sure of itself. It moves here in a sphere the world cannot enter, still less conquer. *Quis Separabit?* In face of life's sternest tragedies, of its utmost extremities, it joins in the Apostle's triumphant hymn of faith, knowing with him that neither life nor death, things present nor things to come, can shut it off from the Infinite Love.[1]

3. There is less luck in human affairs than is popularly supposed, and he is foolish who fears or trusts it. The truth is that chance is nothing but a vocable which we employ when there is a gap in our wisdom, and our insight into the connexion of cause and effect is at fault. It is more a name for something in ourselves than for anything in nature without. We designate as chance those effects which do not seem to have proceeded from purpose and design. Thus we call it chance when any event occurs which was not intended by man; just as our Lord says, "By chance there came down a certain priest that way." And in that case the word has no objectionable meaning. We also speak of chance, however, when a thing happens which seems to us contrary to the plan and intention of God, and then the word is a mere word. We speak of necessity when the weary veteran, after the eyes—the windows of sense—have been closed, and the door of the mouth seldom opens, and the grey head has long worn the livery of death, dies by the decay of nature. For we perceive that there is a plan and design in the mowing down of the grain when it has reached maturity, and in the discharge of the labourer

[1] J. Brierley, *The Secret of Living*, 157.

from the field when his blunted tools are of no further use. When, however, the youth is unexpectedly snatched away, by such a casualty as the fall, perhaps, of a tile from the roof; when the goodly framework is shattered before the spirit it contained has unfolded its wings,—we then speak of chance, because we do not here see the Divine purpose.

¶ "Chance" is a relation. The word does mean something; and it is, therefore, foolish to tell children, that "there is no such thing as chance." It is a relation in which the connexion between cause and effect is too subtle for our discovery or too complex for us to calculate. The planet's motion, for instance, we can reckon and predict; the fall of dice we cannot, not because the case is too subtle, but because the calculation is too complex. So, too, with a projectile like a cannon ball,—given the direction and quantity of force, we can tell where it will light. It is different with the fall of a leaf, owing to its irregular shape and the uncertain impact of the gusts of wind that may carry it we know not whither. Yet, in the strict sense, there is as little "chance" in the fall of the dice as in the course of the planet, or in the fall of the leaf as in the destination of the cannon ball. Chance is not a thing, but a relation. With God there is no chance—because He knows all forces and their direction.[1]

¶ A man was speaking to me not long ago about one of the leading commercial men in this city. "What is there in him or about him to explain his success?" asked the man, and he answered his own question with the round assertion that "it was all luck." It happened that I had some reliable information about the man under discussion, and I want you to have it. Thirty years ago he was working from ten to twelve hours in the day as just an ordinary workman. At the close of each day's toil he had his programme of studies, which, in the range and character of the subjects attacked, would not have disgraced a good student at any university. Eventually his attention to business and his marked attainments won for him the recognition of his employers, which meant in after years a place which was ultimately a leading place, as one of them. Yet this was the man who was said to have won his success by a lucky turn of the wheel.[2]

¶ Sir Frederick Treves once said to the students at the Aberdeen University: "The man who is content to wait for a stroke of good fortune will probably wait until he has a stroke of paralysis."

[1] A. A. Hodge, in *Princetoniana*, by C. A. Salmond, 172.
[2] A. Shepherd, *Men in the Making*, 73.

# The Lamp of the Lord.

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## The Lamp of the Lord.

**The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord.—Prov. xx. 27.**

1. The picture which these words suggest is very simple. An unlighted candle is standing in the darkness, and some one comes to light it. A blazing bit of paper holds the fire at first, but it is vague and fitful. It flares and wavers, and at any moment may go out. But the vague, uncertain, flaring blaze touches the candle, and the candle catches fire, and at once you have a steady flame. It burns straight and clear and constant. The candle gives the fire a manifestation-point for all the room which is illuminated by it. The candle is glorified by the fire, and the fire is manifested by the candle. The two bear witness that they were made for one another by the way in which they fulfil each other's life. That fulfilment comes by the way in which the inferior substance renders obedience to its superior. The candle obeys the fire. The docile wax acknowledges that the subtle flame is its master and it yields to his power; and so, like every faithful servant of a noble master, it at once gives its master's nobility the chance to utter itself, and its own substance is clothed with a glory which is not its own. The disobedient granite, if you try to burn it, neither gives the fire a chance to show its brightness nor gathers any splendour to itself. It only glows with sullen resistance, and, as the heat increases, splits and breaks, but will not yield. But the candle obeys, and so in it the scattered fire finds a point of permanent and clear expression.

2. Now the text asserts that the spirit of man is the lamp of Jehovah. The phrase is strong and emphatic. It is not that the Lord has put a lamp in the spirit of man; it is much more than that; the spirit itself is the lamp. The spirit of man is a torch, a lighthouse, planted in the centre of the temple of his nature, shedding its sacred light upon the inmost abysses of his being,

"searching all the inward parts of the moral nature." This inward lamp "lighteth every man that cometh into the world." The multitudes of our race destitute of the written revelation have nevertheless this inward revelation. The human spirit instinctively apprehends certain great spiritual truths without reasoning upon them. "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." The human spirit is a revelation from God and is itself a Divine Scripture as sacred as the written Word itself. It may be darkened by the mist and miasma arising from the corruptions of our nature, so also may the written revelation be perverted and beclouded by ignorance, prejudice, by selfish passions and unbelief, but this inward lamp is extinguished in none, not even in the most savage or debased of the human race. Under every possible condition of life, the spirit of man witnesses, with voices more or less distinct, to certain great fundamental verities relating to both God and man.

¶ In the "Odes of Solomon," we read (Ode 25): "Thou didst set me a lamp at my right hand, and at my left, and in me there shall be nothing without Light, and I was clothed with the covering of thy Spirit, and I have risen above that of skin, for thy right hand lifted me up, and removed sickness from me, and I became mighty in the truth, and holy by thy righteousness." Again we read (Ode 40): "My spirit exults in His love, and in Him my soul shines."

## I.

### The Spirit of Man is a Lamp.

The ancient world believed that fire and life were one and the same thing. Life was a flame, a lamp, a torch. The human soul was of the nature of fire; and fire, being the common element of the gods and their creatures, was the soul of the universe. Now the ancients were entirely right as regards animal life, for that depends upon the constant burning up of the food which we eat, by the help of the air which we breathe. Our bodies move about

and are warm, just like so many locomotive steam-engines because of the fire that is always burning within them. Life is really a fire, and the food we eat is the fuel that feeds it. And so one of the heathen images for death, which we see sometimes on gravestones and cemetery gates, is a torch turned upside down.

But man is a complex, compound, mysterious being, possessing a threefold nature,—body, mind, spirit—these three, and the greatest of these is the spirit. The *body* demands light, air, food, clothing, a habitation to dwell in. The *mind* is the thinking, the reasoning power; with this he acquires knowledge of men, of things, of the universe, of its laws and forces. The *spirit* is the religious, the worshipping part of his nature. This renders him capable of receiving God, of enjoying God, of communing with God, and of resembling God. "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." God may pass through a rock, but that rock cannot be inspired, for it has no spirit. God may pass through the animal, but the animal cannot be inspired, for it has no spiritual nature. It would be out of place and unnatural to speak of an inspired dog or an inspired horse; but man, in the possession of spirit, may be conscious of the incoming, the indwelling of the Spirit of God. That Divine Spirit can, and does occasionally, communicate to the human spirit thoughts and feelings that can find full expression only in exclaiming with Paul "whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth."

1. The spirit is a lamp because it is endowed with the light of reason. The Book of Proverbs lays great stress upon instruction and understanding; it commends knowledge as one of the main paths that lead to a full and worthy life, and that because all true knowledge culminates in the knowledge of God. Religious people have not always had a fitting appreciation of the worth of knowledge: they have occasionally talked as if reason were the enemy of faith, and as though we had to choose between head and heart—or rather as though the head had to be cut off in order that the heart might beat the more strongly! But there is no conflict between faith and reason, between religion and science; we need not turn down the lamp of the understanding in order to

luxuriate in some dim religious light, so-called. As the Apostle says, "Ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness." All truth is from God—all truth leads to God; let us welcome it and trust it; let us "hear instruction, and refuse it not."

2. The lamp burns with the light of conscience. Every human being has a conscience, yet few people know its nature; just as everybody drinks water, but few people understand its chemical composition. In the case of the water we drink, fortunately we are refreshed just as fully with the peasant's ignorance as with the chemical knowledge of Michael Faraday. It is not so, however, with conscience. The more fully we understand its nature and laws—other things being equal—the better can we follow its guidance, and the nobler lives we may lead. So, in addition to the interest attaching to the subject as a fascinating problem in the science of mind, it has also a great interest as a question bearing directly upon practical life. For conscience will not tell us in every case just what is the right thing to do. We have often seen equally conscientious people on opposite sides. The first and most important thing is that there should shine and burn in us an unquenchable conviction that there is a right, and that we ought under all circumstances to follow the dictates of our awakened moral sense. We have to believe that these dictates are from God—not the variable rules of mere expediency and opportunism, but of Divine authority; and as in the symbolism of the older Churches a sacred lamp was kept alight in the sanctuary, which it was held sacrilege to extinguish, so we must beware of putting out or darkening, by sophisms and self-deception, that candle of the Lord which He has lit in our spirits.

¶ Being convinced that the inner light was universal, Fox had the courage to believe that heathen people were led of the Spirit of God. Thus in America, when a doctor denied that the Indians possessed any such light, Fox called an Indian, and asked "Whether or not, when he lied or did wrong to any one, there was not something in him that reproved him for it?" The Indian said there was. Here Fox anticipated a view that has since been forced upon Christian thought by the comparative study of religions. He believed that God had not left Himself anywhere

without witness, and he maintained this faith before the knowledge of non-Christian religions brought it into prominence. He did not hesitate to call this inner light the inward Christ, even among the heathen who knew not Christ's name. For he assumed that the witness of God was one, and that this Spirit which reproved the Indian was the Spirit which would bring him to Christ. This may still be considered assumption, but it is an assumption the Christian must make.[1]

¶ It would seem, indeed, as though the sense of sin did not reside in the act at all, but only in the sense that the act is committed in defiance of light and higher instinct. But however much we may philosophize about sin or attempt to analyse its essence, there is some dark secret there, of which from time to time we are grievously conscious. Who does not know the sense of failure to overcome, of lapsing from a hope or a purpose, the burden of the thought of some cowardice or unkindness which we cannot undo and which we need not have committed? No resolute determinism can ever avail us against the stern verdict of that inner tribunal of the soul, which decides, too, by some instinct that we cannot divine, to sting and torture us with the memory of deeds, the momentousness and importance of which we should utterly fail to explain to others. There are things in my own past which would be met with laughter and ridicule if I attempted to describe them, that still make me blush to recollect with a sense of guilt and shame, and seem indelibly branded upon the mind. There are things, too, of which I do not feel ashamed which, if I were to describe them to others, would be received with a sort of incredulous consternation, to think that I could have performed them. That is the strange part of the inner conscience, that it seems so wholly independent of tradition or convention.[2]

## II.

### God Kindles the Lamp.

1. All nature tells us that God is light, and that He ever seeks for opportunities of manifesting that light which is so often imprisoned and only waiting to be released by the touch of man. We are constantly finding that there are great resources for light in this world of ours, more than we had ever imagined. Not even at night, when this hemisphere is in the shade and does not

[1] H. G. Wood, *George Fox*, 145. [2] A. C. Benson, *The Silent Isle*, 133.

enjoy the light of the sun, does God leave it to darkness. Then the moon and stars shine forth: but beyond all that, then does man draw upon the resources of light which lie buried or hidden in nature till he learns how to call them forth. In the history of the ages there is no progress greater than in the discovery of the possibilities on the part of man of producing light. This age supplies exceptional illustrations of this. Man is finding, as he never did before, that nature has light-giving capacities which need only be touched to be brought forth; that God has filled even the material world with possibilities of grand outbursts of light. What would God have us learn from all this? That there is more light in His universe than we had ever thought; that He, true to His own nature, has placed in it capacities for outshining which are chained up for the present, but which He calls men to unloose, so that they may burst forth into light.

¶ It is not surprising that, prominent among the idolatries of the world, there should be found the worship of fire and of light. Once become an idolater, and it becomes easy to worship fire—that wonderful thing in nature which we find everywhere and in every object, even in ice; that which you can strike out of everything, especially when you strike with a suddenness that seems to take it unawares. The old flint and tinder were but an outward visible sign of an inward visible presence everywhere. God's fire is to be found in all nature; often latent, but at such times it seems to be watching for opportunities of manifestation. Deep beneath the surface of the earth there is a lake of fire which is checked only by mighty forces, and which, here and there, finds an outlet for its seething, restless waves in volcanoes that heave, and groan, and belch out liquid lava. The heavens, too, are full of kindling orbs. Fire is well-nigh omnipresent, and omnipresence is one of the attributes of Deity.[1]

2. God's favourite method of letting His light shine is through man. Man's spirit kindles more brightly with God's light than all the suns in the heavens. God's favourite method of making Himself known is through man. The choice lamp of the Lord is the spirit of man. He has lit up tapers in suns which flame in the heavens, but when God would use His best lamp, He comes to men—"The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord." For only

[1] D. Davies, *Talks with Men, Women and Children*, vi. 211.

a person can truly utter a person. Only from a character can a character be echoed. You might write it all over the skies that God is just, but it would not burn there. It would be, at best, only a bit of knowledge, never a gospel, never something which it would gladden the hearts of men to know. That comes only when a human life, capable of a justice like God's, made just by God, glows with His justice in the eyes of men, a candle of the Lord.

¶ We have seen monuments, tablets, tombstones with names, dates, events recorded that were not readable on account of the dust and moss of years which had accumulated and covered the inscription. It is not necessary to engrave the stone afresh; only sweep away the accumulation of years, and you shall know to whose memory that stone was raised. So if you will rub off the incrustations of sin and error gathered over the human soul you will find the Great Name—God—written deep and large in the very depth of the spirit. Just as the flower has an instinctive tendency to turn towards the sun, so man, even in his lowest estate, has certain instincts which impel him towards God and to cry, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: When shall I come and appear before God?" You possess capacities, you have wants which the Infinite alone can fill and satisfy. Until the God you have lost is restored to His rightful Sovereignty in your heart, the deepest cry of your spirit will be, "O that I knew where I might find him!" [1]

(1) God lets His light shine in ordinary human life. He transfigures even the physical in man. You have seen many a human face that has become angelic through the outshining of the Divine presence. You have seen God's light in a man's heart shine forth through his countenance, though that countenance has been by no means naturally beautiful. Some wondrous brightness in the eye or radiance in the face told us that there was a lamp inside. But where God shines most is through the spiritual in man. Look at the history of Divine revelation—for there we have the greatest outshining of God, from the earliest age until now—and say whether there was anything that revealed so much of God throughout the old dispensation as the inspired utterances of Divinely enlightened men? God set their hearts aflame; thus they spoke to men in melting words. They were the lamps of

[1] R. Roberts.

God to their age and generation. God has never been without witness; He has never been without His chosen lights, His messengers who have testified of His truth, His love, and His purity. Take away from this world and from the record of it the lives of holy men, brilliant because consecrated by a Divine touch that kindled them into a flame, and what have you left?

¶ The benighted traveller in the snow has sometimes caught sight of a candle in a shepherd's hut. It has been to him the most joyful of all moments; it is the promise of rest. Even such, I think, is the thought of the proverb. The man who uttered it knew well the saying of the old book of Genesis that when God had wandered six days through creation He rested in man. He had been led on by the glimmer of one candle—the light of a human soul. It was the only place of rest the Father saw in all the vast expanse. There was no other dwelling for the spirit of my Father but *my* spirit. He could not find shelter in any other home. Not "where the bee sucks" could my Father dwell. Not where the bird sings could His heart be glad. Not where the cattle browse could His life repose. Not where the stars shine could He find His household fire. One far-off candle alone gave the sign of home. It was my spirit.[1]

(2) When at length God gave the greatest of revelations, a revelation which was the consummation of all preceding ones; when the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in His wings; then when the morning stars which heralded the light had disappeared in the brightness of His rising, when the Son of God came He took not on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. When God would shine forth in all the brightness of His grace, thank God, it was in human form. His greatest gift was in the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief": a man though God: human though Divine. He who came thus in human form was "the effulgence of the Father's glory, the express image of his person."

¶ One of the heroes of the old Greek legends of whom the Greeks were very fond was called Prometheus. His name means "forethought." He was the friend of the human race, and the inventor and teacher of the arts which adorn life. The Greeks believed that Prometheus took away from man the evil gift of

[1] G. Matheson, *Leaves for Quiet Hours*, 144.

being able to foresee the future; and that he was the first who brought fire to men, and taught its use. Pitying the misery of men, who knew not how to cook, he stole fire from heaven, and gave it to them. He also formed men out of clay or mud, and made them alive by putting in a spark of fire, or causing the winds to breathe life into them. But we who have the Bible in our hands know that the Lord Jesus Christ is the real Prometheus. His human soul, indeed, is a lamp which God kindled at Bethlehem nearly nineteen hundred years ago. But as the God-man, He is a Fire,—"the Dayspring from on high,"—"the true Light which, coming into the world, lighteth every man." "In him is life; and the life is the light of men." He is "come to send fire on the earth"—the fire of grace, and refining fire, as well as the fire of judgment. He baptizes "with the Holy Ghost and with fire"—to enlighten the mind, and purify the conscience, and warm the heart with the Divine love.[1]

¶ I think I am beginning to feel something of the intense pride and atheism of my own heart, of its hatred to truth, of its utter lovelessness; and something I do hope, that I have seen very dimly of the way in which Christ, by being the Light and Truth manifested, shines into the heart and puts light there, even while we feel that the Light and Truth is still all in Him, and that in ourselves there is nothing but thick darkness. I do not know whether you have been led to think as much as I have lately about all those texts which represent Him as Light, as shining into the heart, and in connexion therewith, as wrestling with the powers of darkness. "There was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour." "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." He that "caused the light to shine out of darkness shine into your heart." They afforded me very great delight some time ago when nothing else would; an intense thick darkness, darkness that might be felt, brooding over my mind, till the thought that had been brought to me as if from Heaven—"the light of the Sun is not in you but out of you, and yet you can see everything by it if you will open your eyes"—gave me more satisfaction than any other could. Since then another train of feeling led me to experience the intense misery of pride and self, as if that were the seal of the darkness, and that I could find no relief but in joining the two thoughts together: it was pride, it was self, it was sin, which separated between me and God, which produced the darkness. Christ had taken that away, and therefore the true Light shineth.[2]

[1] C. Jerdan, *Messages to the Children*, 38.

[2] *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, i. 119.

## III.

### The Office of the Lamp is to Shine.

1. *The lamp of God in our nature gives forth a self-searching light.*—It searches the hidden recesses of a man's own nature. It is that by which God seeks to make it impossible for us to sin with impunity. It is the Lord's light in man that protests against the darkness of ignorance and unbelief, and brings to view life's privileges and responsibilities. It is the flame in the heart that claims relationship with Him who is light and in whom is no darkness at all.

¶ "I cannot do this," said a Christian merchant, in reference to some business operations in which he was asked to take part, "I cannot do this. There is a man inside of me that won't let me do it. He talks to me of nights about it, and I have to do business in a different way." Thank God for the restraining testimony of conscience! Let us always listen to the witness, and follow its guidance. Let Lord Erskine's rule be ours. That rule he stated publicly at the bar in these unmistakable words: "It was the first command and counsel of my youth, always to do what my conscience told me to be my duty, and leave the consequence to God. I have hitherto followed it, and have no reason to complain that any obedience to it has been even a temporal sacrifice; I have found it, on the contrary, the road to prosperity and wealth, and I shall point it out as such to my children." Akin to this was John Wesley's rule: "To follow my own conscience, without any regard to consequences, or prudence, so called, is a rule which I have followed for many years, and hope to follow to my life's end."[1]

2. *The lamp is to be God's witness in the world.*—God says to each of us: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." The Christian, wherever he goes, is to show forth certain clear-shining qualities which will commend his Christianity, and so lead men, whether consciously or unconsciously, to Christ. Lives are the best preachers; and many an obscure Christian man or woman, filled with the constraining love of Christ, practising day by day the dear simplicities of the gospel, preaches a sermon which

[1] J. T. Whitley.

he who runs may read, or listen to, and whose closing notes are not heard on this earth at all. Lives are the best preachers; it is they alone that "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."

¶ You remember those lovely lines which Shakespeare places in Portia's mouth when she returns from Venice to her home in Belmont:

> That light we see is burning in my hall.
> How far that little candle throws his beams!
> So shines a good deed in a naughty world.

And we are candles—our spirits the candles of the Lord; lights whose clear shining may haply show to some perplexed soul the absolute worth of right-doing, the glory of steadfastness, the reward of trust, the joy of self-giving, self-forgetting love, the infinite affection of God—the way home to Him who is ready to receive the soul that longs for Him.[1]

¶ When I was a boy and lived on a farm in the North-Western frontier, we used to go to church in an old log schoolhouse in the woods. Evening meetings in those days were always announced to begin "at early candle-light." There were not even oil-lamps in the old schoolhouse. There was an unwritten rule in the neighbourhood that each family attending the service should bring at least one candle. The first man who arrived lighted his candle and put it up in one of the wooden candlesticks, or set it on the window-sill, fastened at the base in a little tallow-drip, dripping the tallow hot and then steadying the candle in it before it cooled. So every man who came in lighted his candle, and as the congregation grew the light grew. If there was a small congregation, there was what might be called "a dim religious light," and if there was a large congregation, the place was illuminated by the light of many candles. Now it should be like that in the spiritual illumination which we give in the world. Every one of us should add our own light to the combined illumination of all other faithful souls.[2]

¶ In Athens, long ago, games used to be held in honour of the Grecian gods and heroes. One of these was a torch-race—that is, a race of torch-bearers—which was run at night in honour of Prometheus. The starting-point was a mile and a half out of the city, in the olive grove where Plato had his "Academy," this spot being chosen because Prometheus had a sanctuary there. The winning-post was within the city; and the runner who reached it

[1] J. Warschauer, *The Way of Understanding*, 177.
[2] L. A. Banks, *The Problems of Youth*, 298.

first with his torch still burning gained the prize. In like manner our Christian life here on earth is "the race that is set before us." We shall have run that race well, if, when we come at last into God's presence, our lights are still burning. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." [1]

3. *This lamp needs continual tending.*—Man is selfish and disobedient, and will not let his life burn at all. Man is wilful and passionate, and kindles his life with ungodly fire. Man is narrow and bigoted, and makes the light of God shine with his own special colour. In certain lands, for certain holy ceremonies, they prepare the candles with most anxious care. The very bees which distil the wax are sacred. They range in gardens planted with sweet flowers for their use alone. The wax is gathered by consecrated hands; and then the shaping of the candles is a holy task, performed in holy places, to the sound of hymns, and in the atmosphere of prayers. All this is done because the candles are to burn in the most lofty ceremonies on most sacred days. With what care must the man be made whose spirit is to be the candle of the Lord! It is his spirit which God is to kindle with Himself. Therefore the spirit must be the precious part of him. The body must be valued only for the protection and the education which the soul may gain by it. And the power by which his spirit shall become a candle is obedience. Therefore obedience must be the struggle and desire of his life; obedience not hard and forced, but ready, loving, and spontaneous; the obedience of the child to the father, of the candle to the flame; the doing of duty not merely that duty may be done, but that the soul in doing it may become capable of receiving and uttering God; the bearing of pain not merely because the pain must be borne, but in order that the bearing of it may make the soul able to burn with the Divine fire which found it in the furnace; the repentance of sin and acceptance of forgiveness, not merely that the soul may be saved from the fire of hell, but that it may be touched with the fire of heaven, and shine with the love of God, as the stars, for ever.

¶ You are a part of God! You have no place or meaning in this world but in relationship to Him. The full relationship can be realized only by obedience. Be obedient to Him, and you shall

[1] C. Jerdan, *Messages to the Children*, 40.

shine by His light, not your own. Then you cannot be dark, for He shall kindle you. Then you shall be as incapable of burning with false passion as you shall be quick to answer with the true. Then the devil may hold his torch to you, as he held it to the heart of Jesus in the desert, and your heart shall be as uninflammable as His. But as soon as God touches you, you shall burn with a light so truly your own that you shall reverence your own mysterious life, and yet so truly His that pride shall be impossible. What a philosophy of human life is that! "O, to be nothing, nothing!" cries the mystic singer in his revival hymn, desiring to lose himself in God. "Nay, not that; O to be something, something," remonstrates the unmystical man, longing for work, ardent for personal life and character. Where is the meeting of the two? How shall self-surrender meet that high self-value without which no man can justify his living and honour himself in his humanity? Where can they meet but in this truth? Man must be something that he may be nothing. The something which he must be consists in simple fitness to utter the Divine life which is the only original power in the universe. And then man must be nothing that he may be something. He must submit himself in obedience to God, that so God may use him, in some way in which his special nature only could be used, to illuminate and help the world.[1]

¶ Long ago one could have seen, in not a few churches, upon Christmas Eve, two small lights, symbolizing the Divine and human natures, being gradually brought together until they blended in one brilliant flame. This truth was also typified in the cloven tongues of fire that hovered over the disciples' heads upon the day of Pentecost. So with the restoration of the vital connexions between man and God through Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit shall commingle with our spirit, intensifying the holy flame, so that it shall penetrate to the farthest reaches of life and character. Our moral vision shall be corrected, so that truth and error, right and wrong shall appear to us in sharply-defined contrast. He shall lead us into all truth.

Come, Light serene and still,
Our inmost bosoms fill;
  Dwell in each breast:
We know no dawn but Thine;
Send forth Thy beams divine,
On our dark souls to shine,
  And make us blest.[2]

[1] P. Brooks, *The Candle of the Lord*, 17. [2] W. King.

# The Training of Children.

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## The Training of Children.

**Train up a child in the way he should go,**
**And even when he is old he will not depart from it.—Prov. xxii. 6.**

The text may have originated with Solomon. If so, it contains the judgment of the most observant and sagacious of men. More probably it was a proverb in Israel, and therefore expresses the general judgment of the race which has trained its children more admirably than any other which has yet appeared on earth.

It is the Scripture expression of the principle on which all education rests, that a child's training can decide what his after-life is to be. Without this faith there could be no thought of anything like education; when this faith is elevated to a trust in God and His promises, it grows into the assurance that a parent's labour will not be in vain in the Lord.

### I.

### The Parents.

"The Lord hath given the father honour over the children, and hath confirmed the authority of the mother over the sons," says Ecclesiasticus. It is a rare opportunity which is given to parents. No sphere of influence which they may acquire can be like it; other spheres may be wider, but they can never be so intense or so decisive.

1. To govern their children, parents must first be able to govern themselves. A large part of parental discipline must consist in rewards and punishments. God's government is full of them. Every act of obedience to His law is rewarded; every act of disobedience is punished. But the Divine punishments are

administered without a tinge of passion. When parents punish children, it is often only bad temper at work. A child by his fretful ways makes the house a purgatory until his mother's patience is exhausted. Then she boxes his ears, and so makes him realize, not that she can govern him, but that she cannot govern herself.

¶ The way to train the child is to train yourself. What you are, he will be. If your hands are morally dirty, his life will be dirtied by the home handling he gets. If he is to obey his mother he must breathe in a spirit of obedience from his mother. Your child will never obey more than you do. The spirit of disobedience in your heart to God, of failure to obey, of preferring your own way to God's, will be breathed in by your child as surely as he breathes the air into his lungs. A spirit of quiet confidence in God, in the practical things that pinch and push, will breathe itself into the child. A poised spirit, a keen mind, a thoughtful tongue, a cheery hopefulness, an earnest purpose, in mother and father will be taken into the child's being with every breath. And the reverse is just as true. Every child is an accurate bit of French-plate faithfully showing the likeness of mother and father and home. We must be in heart what we would have the child be in life.[1]

2. A successful parent will be one who makes the training of the children a constant and religious study. It is the last subject in the world to be left to haphazard. From the first a clear aim must be kept in view. "Is my great object that this boy shall be a true, a noble, a God-fearing man, serving his day and generation in the way God shall appoint?" That is the question which the parent puts to himself.

¶ Among the Bishop's *obiter dicta* on education is the following:—"The old heathens had very right notions about the way in which a child ought to be trained up. They had great belief in a pure domestic education. One of them said, 'Let nothing unclean ever enter into the house where a little child is,' no drunken man, no quarrelling father or mother, no bad language, no careless, slovenly habits; let nothing of the sort be seen in the house where dwells the little child. A Roman poet has said, 'The greatest possible reverence is due to a child.' Some parents are wonderfully careless about what sort of things they say before their

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Home Ideals*, 253.

children. They seem to forget that the little children are listening, and that their characters are being formed by ten thousand insensible influences that surround them day by day." [1]

3. Parents must live near to God if they are to make God real to their children. A mother must hold very real converse with her Lord if His reality is to become obvious to her little ones. "As a child," says one, "I have had a feeling that God and Jesus were such particular friends of mamma's, and were honoured more than words could tell." If such an impression is to be created, depend upon it God and Jesus must be particular friends of ours. No talk, however pious, can create that impression unless the hallowed friendship actually exists.

¶ Mrs. Haldane [the mother of James and Robert Haldane, who did so much for evangelical religion in Scotland at the beginning of the nineteenth century] belonged to a family in which there had been much true religion. "She lived," said her eldest son, "very near to God, and much grace was given to her." When left a widow, it became her chief concern to bring up her children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." From their infancy she laboured to instil into their minds a sense of the importance of eternity, particularly impressing upon them the necessity of prayer, and teaching them to commit to memory and understand psalms, portions of the Shorter Catechism, and of Scripture. In a memorandum found among his papers, her youngest son James says: "My mother died when I was very young, I believe under six, yet I am convinced that the early impression made on my mind by her care was never entirely effaced; and to this, as an eminent means in the hand of God, I impute any serious thoughts which, in the midst of my folly would sometimes intrude upon my mind, as well as that still small voice of conscience which afterwards led me to see that all below was vanity without an interest in that inheritance which can never fade away." He adds: "I mention this more particularly because it may lead Christian parents to sow in hope the seed of Divine truth in the minds of their children, and may prevent their considering their efforts unavailing even where the things which they have taught seem to have been uttered in vain. No means of grace is, I apprehend, more, perhaps none is so much, countenanced of God as early religious instruction." [2]

[1] J. W. Diggle, *The Lancashire Life of Bishop Fraser*, 231.
[2] *The Lives of Robert and James Alexander Haldane*, 11.

4. Without love in the home, all the parents' efforts will fail. Love is the only atmosphere in which the spirits of little children can grow. Without it the wisest precepts only choke, and the best-prepared knowledge proves innutritious. It must be a large love, a wise love, an inclusive love, such as God alone can shed abroad in the heart. Love of that kind is very frequently found in "huts where poor men lie," and consequently the children issuing out of them have been better trained than those whose parents have handed them over to loveless tutors or underlings.

¶ Perhaps there is no criterion by which to estimate a Christian's life and influence so just, so simple, so ungainsayable, as that of the fruits of his faith and of his works in his own family. It is a quality of virtue, as truly as it is of sin, to reproduce itself! And there is no soil so favourable for the manifestation of a man's graces as that of his home. He is master of the situation. His sway is almost unlimited. He can plant what he will, and very largely destroy what displeases him. To leave the best soil to itself is sufficient to ensure an abundant crop of weeds. But of what use is the gardener unless he uproots and replaces them with flowers? This is his business. That he can, with care, succeed, is aptly illustrated in the family history of Mrs. Booth. She *commanded* her children, and insisted on their obeying God, till obedience to His will developed into a blessed habit. It became early easier to be holy than to be sinful, to do good than to do evil, to sacrifice than to enjoy. The children could not fail to imbibe the lessons learnt from the lips and lives of their parents. There was an atmosphere of holy chivalry, which spurred them on to generous and noble deeds.[1]

## II.

### The Child.

That childhood is the proper period for education is one of the most obvious of all general truths. It is crystallized in the well-known Scottish proverb—

> Learn young, learn fair;
> Learn auld, learn sair.

One might almost say that everything is settled by the time a boy or girl reaches fifteen or sixteen. Most of the trials and

[1] F. Booth-Tucker, *The Life of Catherine Booth*, ii. 104.

temptations, and most of the opportunities for development, still lie ahead, but the way in which the boy or girl will meet those temptations, and rise or fail to rise to those opportunities, is to a large extent decided.

1. The child ought to be trained for its own sake. And there are four things which have to be considered in this connexion.

(1) The child has a *body*. It will depend much upon our knowledge of its physical nature, and our action in regard to it, whether the child will have a healthy life or an unhealthy one. The foundation of many weaknesses and diseases, which the storm and stress of after life bring out, may be laid in childhood.

¶ The body should be trained for its own sake, and for its influence higher up. It should be properly fed and cared for, and taught to obey the laws of the body, that so health may come and stay. It should be developed symmetrically, and trained to hard work. A healthful, supple body is the foundation of strong character and of skill. That is where life starts. This is beginning lowest, but not beginning low. At the lowest it is high. The body has immense influence upon mind and character, occupation and career.[1]

(2) The child has a *heart*. We appeal to the affections. For the training of these the early years of the life are important. What the child will be in its affectional relations depends largely upon these first years. The child's first school-room is its mother's heart, and the child whose mother has a shrivelled and lifeless affectional nature is well-nigh sure to be spoiled.

¶ Passion and emotion were regarded by James Mill as forms of madness, and the "intense" was a by-word of scorn. He advocated the restriction of the private affections and the expansion of altruistic zeal to the utmost. He accepted the dicta of his Utilitarian cult, that men are born alike, and that every child's mind is a *tabula rasa* on which experience registers its impressions. In harmony with this conception, education was, of course, the formative factor in determining life and shaping character. It should begin with the dawn of consciousness and be prosecuted without stint. How absolutely James Mill endorsed these views is evident from the methods he adopted in training his eldest son. There have been few more pathetic juvenile histories than that of John Stuart Mill. The story is a strange

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Home Ideals*, 237.

one; and were it not so well substantiated, doubts as to its accuracy would be legitimate. It has been received with feelings of amazement, mingled with those of sympathy and indignation. Despite the fact that his temperament was highly emotional and even religiously inclined, he was early compelled to face life from the purely intellectual standpoint. Before he was sufficiently mature to register a protest, his father forced him outside the pale of all sentiment, and charged him with the insolence of a philosophical system which had no limitations. Such hard and metallic treatment robbed the son of any opportunity to develop and understand the romantic side of his nature. Many of the sorrows that beset his career can be traced to this well-nigh unpardonable error.[1]

(3) The child has a *mind*. Observation, perception, the first glimmerings of reason, imagination—the lack of training in regard to any one of these things will make a gap in the life, and it may have serious results. We must train the whole mind, not the intellect only.

¶ You will all recollect that some time ago there was a scandal and a great outcry about certain cutlasses and bayonets which had been supplied to our troops and sailors. These warlike implements were polished as bright as rubbing could make them; they were very well sharpened; they looked lovely. But when they were applied to the test of the work of war they broke and they bent and proved more likely to hurt the hand of him that used them than to do any harm to the enemy. Let me apply that analogy to the effect of education, which is a sharpening and polishing of the mind. You may develop the intellectual side of people as far as you like, and you may confer upon them all the skill that training and instruction can give; but, if there is not underneath all that outside form and superficial polish, the firm fibre of healthy manhood and earnest desire to do well, your labour is absolutely in vain.[2]

(4) The child has a *soul*. The soul is also the creature of habit. The soul learns its habits even as the body and the mind acquire theirs, by use and practice. The habit of living without God is one which may be learned by the child. It is one of the easiest of all habits to acquire. Unlike some other habits, it demands no exertion and no self-denial. But there is another, an opposite, habit of the soul, that of living to God, with God, and in

[1] S. P. Cadman, *Charles Darwin and Other English Thinkers*, 94.
[2] T. H. Huxley, *Collected Essays*, iii. 445.

God. That too is a habit, not formed so soon or so easily as the other, yet like it formed by a succession of acts, each easier than the last, and each making the next easier still.

¶ He that has made a leap to-day can more easily make the same leap to-morrow; and he will make a longer or higher leap soon, perhaps the day after. His muscles are stretched, and are also strengthened. This we call practice. From it comes a certain state of the body. So from practice in good or evil comes a certain state of the mind. This is called habit: and it tends to the doing again with more ease what we have already done with less. The thought of that mighty engine! never slumbering, ever working: self-feeding, self-acting: powerful and awful servant of God who ordained it: powerful and restless, too, alike for the destruction and for the salvation of souls. What we do without *habit* we do because it pleases at the time. But what we do by habit we do even though it pleases little or not at all at the time. Place habit, then, on the side of religion. You cannot depend upon your tastes and feelings towards Divine things to be uniform: lay hold upon an instrument which will carry you over their inequalities, and keep you in the honest practice of your spiritual exercises, when but for this they would have been intermitted.[1]

2. The child ought to be trained for national reasons. The true riches of a country lie in its manhood, and the child is manhood in the germ. The promise of the future is in our children. We hear that to keep up an army and navy, to prosecute wars here and there, is necessary to open and keep open markets, and push trade. We are told that trade follows the flag, and that the Union Jack is a commercial asset. There is a more valuable commercial asset that we are in danger of ignoring —the child.

¶ There is a story told of a procession in an ancient city. The old veterans, whose days were drawing to a close, but who had spent years in the service of their nation, walked first. They were led by a man bearing aloft the motto, "We have been brave." They were followed by those in active service, the manhood of the people, who bore the motto, "We are brave." The rear was brought up by the youths and lads, who bore aloft this inscription, "We will be brave."[2]

[1] *Letters on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone*, ii. 419.

[2] J. W. Clayton, *The Genius of God*, 55.

## III.

### The Education of the Child.

For the word here, *chanok*, translated "train up," there are two root meanings, the one "to make narrow," the other "to put into the mouth for taste and nutrition." Instruction comprehends both conceptions: (1) making narrow, *i.e.*, restraint of all wayward courses, repression of selfish desires and unruly passions; (2) the imparting of sound intellectual nourishment with a view to the growth and vigour of man's higher life.

1. Let us consider first of all the idea of restraint—the negative side of this question of education. We know that weak and sentimental nature which shrinks from inflicting pain under any circumstances. Seizing on the ill-understood doctrine that love is the sovereign power in life and in education, it pleads in the name of love that the offender may be spared, that he may escape the due penalty of his fault. That is not a love like God's love.

Our Heavenly Father chastens His children; by most gracious punishments He brings home to them the sense of sin, and leads them to repentance and amendment. And earthly parents, in proportion as they are led by the Spirit and filled with love, will correct their children, not for their own pleasure, but for their children's good. The truth which underlies these apparently harsh injunctions is this: Love inflicts punishments, nor are any punishments so severe as those which love inflicts; and only the punishments which love inflicts are able to reform and to save the character of the delinquent.

¶ One of the child's main objects in life seems to be imposing its own will on those about it, and this will which the child is always contending for is the merest caprice, and formed no grown-up person can say why. Without experience one could hardly believe what a constant warfare the child wages in getting its own way. That the way of the grown-up person may conceivably be better never comes into the child's head. The child feels the grown person to be stronger, and it learns to submit without the least show of resistance, just as we submit to the weather. But the judicious, loving elder does not like to be always opposing,

and is afraid of crushing the child's free action, so we naturally let the child have its way wherever we can. Then we come to a point where the child's will would cause great inconvenience, perhaps risks that cannot be faced. Then comes the tug. If the child is not coaxed to attend to something else, it sets up a howl and makes itself almost intolerable. Our children have never gained anything in this way, and they mostly understand when they have pushed their own will as far as they will be allowed, but at times they turn "naughty," and the childish "I shan't!" has to be met by *force majeure*.[1]

2. But education has also a positive side. Wise penalties and "reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself causeth shame to his mother." The child must not be left to himself. The parent must bring home to his child's heart those truths of experience which the child cannot at present know. He must train the child with a view to the growth and vigour of man's higher life. How is he to set about this task?

(1) *By wise observation.*—Children are born to go different ways. The master in a menagerie trains each animal according to its nature. He does not try to make a falcon swim, or a fish fly, or an otter climb. But the distinctions between children are no less radical, and are far more subtle and difficult to discern. Parents should remember that because they have succeeded with one child they are in danger of failing with another. They think they have only to cast each child into the same candle mould which shaped their first so well. If men would observe their children, upon whose welfare their most precious hopes depend, with half the judicious care they have bestowed upon beasts and birds and fishes and insects, great would be their reward.

¶ The motherly love of the penguin which smothers its offspring was not hers. She saw that mistaken concern illustrated in many a household which was a model of motherly care in the eyes of a blind world. The result of leading-strings and culture under glass was a feeble manhood and a silly womanhood, was failure of the most dire and dreadful kind. Her little folks were treasures given to her to guard and protect, not to mould into her own image. They had personalities of their own, and inheritances of their own. They were individuals not appendages, and it was her duty, she thought, to enrich them by teaching

[1] *Life and Remains of the Rev. R. H. Quick*, 300.

them how to use their own talents and faculties. Hers was to provide an atmosphere for them to breathe, a purity for them to feel, a liberty for them to employ. She seemed to say: "I am at hand to hold and to help you *if necessary*, but I want you to develop your own little selves so that when you are men and women you will be persons of a free will and not creatures of circumstance." She believed in discipline, but not the discipline of force, not the bowing to an outside order which imposed itself by punishment, but the discipline of spiritual desire, of reasoned conduct, of moral control of emotion and appetite. The words she used in a sentence in the letter she wrote telling her children that their grandmother had died were very significant, "We must try to comfort each other."[1]

(2) *By good instruction.*—A character which is not built up on the basis of truth, and in which there are not deep and strong convictions of truth, will seldom stand the test of this world, and most assuredly will not stand the test of the next. Truth is as much the natural staff of life for the soul as bread is for the body. It cannot be strong and healthy without it. Ignorance is the starvation of the soul; error is its poison; truth is its food and healing medicine.

¶ You are bound to initiate your children, not merely to the joys and desires of life, but to life itself; to its duties, and to its moral Law of Government. Few mothers, few fathers, in this irreligious age—and even especially in the wealthier classes—understand the true gravity of their educational mission. Few mothers, few fathers, remember that the numerous victims, the incessant struggles, and the lifelong martyrdom of our day, are in a great measure the fruit of the *egotism* instilled thirty years back by the weak mothers and heedless fathers who allowed their children to accustom themselves to regard life, not as a mission and a duty, but as a search after happiness, and a study of their own well-being.[2]

(*a*) **God.**—It cannot be inculcated with too much force and frequency that the very highest truths are those which should be imparted at the earliest possible period in a child's history. It is important that as soon as the laws of a child's mind can admit the thought, it should be taught concerning Him who made it and all things, and who rules in heaven and on earth.

[1] J. Ramsay MacDonald, *Margaret Ethel MacDonald*, 130.
[2] *Life and Writings of Joseph Mazzini*, iv. 287.

¶ A child takes in nothing more easily than the thought of One who made the flowers of the earth and the stars of the sky; and as it early comes to know what is meant by love to its parents, it may easily be taught to know what is meant by love to God.[1]

(*b*) **Christ.**—If we are in the wrong way, the more vigorously we prosecute the journey the sooner will disaster come. If we do not train children in truth and righteousness, it would be better that we should not train them at all. Christ is the truth, and the Scriptures the standard by which truth may be known. This is not only religiously the best solution of the question, but philosophically the only solution that can be given.

¶ I have no right to pray for my children unless I am, by my lips and by my life, labouring ceaselessly to lead them to the Saviour's feet. "Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak ye to the children!" I never read that text without thinking of Susanna Wesley. Was there ever a mother like that mother of the Wesleys? One night she had been praying for her great family. "At last," she says, "it came into my mind that I might do more than I do. I resolved to begin. I will take such proportion of time as I can best spare every night to discourse with each child by itself." How Susanna Wesley kept that good resolution, and with what tremendous and earth-shaking results, the whole world very well knows.[2]

(*c*) **The Bible.**—If we do not adopt the Bible as our standard in training the young, moral training is impossible. If in moral principles every man is his own lawgiver, there is no law at all, and no authority. You may train a fruit-tree by nailing its branches to a wall, or by tying them to an espalier railing; but the tree whose branches have nothing to lean on but air is not trained at all. It is not a dispute between the Scriptures and some other rival standard, for no such standard exists or is proposed. It is a question between the Bible as a standard, and no standard at all.

¶ With all my heart I believe that the best basis for education, with which no other documents, catechetical or otherwise, can be compared, is the Holy Scriptures. I should deplore, with more sorrow than I can express, if the time should ever come when these sacred Scriptures—the most simple, as they are the highest literature in the world, the most fitted to instil goodness into the

[1] E. Mellor, *The Hem of Christ's Garment*, 63.
[2] F. W. Boreham, *Mountains in the Mist*, 251.

mind of the child, as they are the most fitted to inspire all nobleness and piety and charity in the heart of man,—I should deplore if the time ever came when the reading and teaching of these Scriptures should form no longer a part of our common educational system. I believe absolutely in the power of the teacher to read and explain the Holy Scriptures without any sectarian admixture. I believe that all that has been said on this point is simply theory, and that practically there is no difficulty. Sectarianism! why the whole spirit of the Bible is opposed to sectarianism. Its living study, its simple reading, are the best correction of sectarianism; and our Churches, one and all, are only sectarian in so far as they have departed from the Bible and thrown it aside.[1]

(3) *By a good example.*—Good instruction is sunlight, but it will not of itself develop and mature a godly life. Children are far less influenced by precept than by example, and it is often the saddest feature in home training that there is so glaring a disparity between the instructions of parents and their own visible and unmistakable life. Our lives are the forces which are in most constant operation upon the minds and hearts of our children. Our character is a stream, a river flowing down upon our children hour by hour. What we do here and there to carry an opposing influence is, at best, only a ripple that we make on the surface of the stream; it reveals the sweep of the current, nothing more. If we expect our children to go with the ripple instead of the stream we shall be disappointed.

¶ Example is one of the most important of instructors, though it teaches without a tongue. Precept may point the way, but it is silent, continuous example, conveyed to us by habits and living with us, that carries us along. Good advice has its weight, but without the accompaniment of a good example it is of comparatively small influence: and it will be found that the common saying of "Do as I say, not as I do," is usually reversed in the actual experience of life. All persons are more apt to learn through the eye rather than the ear, and whatever is seen in fact makes a deeper impression than anything that is read or heard. This is especially the case in early life, when the eye is the chief inlet of knowledge. Whatever children see they unconsciously imitate, and they insensibly become like to those who are about them. Hence the importance of domestic training. For, however efficient our schools, the examples set in our homes must always

[1] Principal Tulloch, in *Memoir*, by Mrs. Oliphant, 266.

be of greater influence in forming the characters of our future men and women; and from that source, be it pure or tainted, issue the habits and principles which govern public as well as private life. From this central spot the human sympathies radiate to an ever-widening circle until the world is embraced: for though true philanthropy, like charity, begins at home, assuredly it does not end there.[1]

3. This training is indeed a work of watchful anxiety, attended with painful, and often long-protracted, exercise of faith and patience. Who can hold on to it, but for the Divine support of the parental promise—"When he is old he shall not depart from it"? The man will be as the child is trained. Education is utterly distinct from grace. But when conducted in the spirit, and on the principles, of the Word of God, it is a means of imparting it. Sometimes the fruit is immediate, uniform, and permanent. But in many cases "the bread cast upon the waters of the covenant is found," not till "after many days," perhaps not till the godly parent has been laid in the grave. Yet the fruit, though late, will be not the less sure.

¶ In the year 1746, on a small island lying off the western coast of Africa, there might be seen a young man of English birth living in a condition of the most abject misery. He was the servant, it might almost be said the slave, of a trafficker in human flesh, who was himself, through his vile lusts, under the bondage of a ferocious negress, by whom his establishment was ruled. Against the English youth her heart was specially set. She starved him; she caused him to be unjustly beaten; she instigated his master against him by false accusations; she refused him when burning with fever even a draught of cold water. Such was the barbarity to which she subjected him that, but for a naturally strong constitution, and the secret assistance of some of the poor slaves of the household, he must have perished. What had brought this youth, who was the son of respectable parents and who had received a good education in his native country, to this deplorable condition? It was chiefly his own wickedness, recklessness, and folly. He had been a wild, ungovernable youth, and had plunged himself into such an abyss of evil that his friends felt it was hopeless to strive to save him, and so they left him to sink. Who that saw that youth in his misery and his wickedness could have believed it possible that ere many years

[1] S. Smiles, *Self-Help*.

had passed he should be one of the most influential clergymen in the British Metropolis, a man of devout piety and zeal for God, a man loved, respected, looked up to by the whole religious world of his day, a man who should leave the stamp of his goodness on the nation at large? And yet all that and more came to pass. The youth was John Newton, the friend of Cowper, the author along with him of the Olney Hymns, and the most venerable name among the Evangelical clergy of the Church of England. And to what did John Newton owe his rescue from the terrible pit into which he had fallen? His mother had died when he was only six years of age, and had been spared the misery of witnessing his career of vice, folly, degradation. But she was a godly woman, and during these six years she had stored his mind with Divine truth, and her earnest prayers for him had gone up for a memorial before God. These early lessons, he himself records, he never could get rid of, even during the wildest part of his career. Do what he would there they were, stamped indelibly on his soul, and ever and anon they would thrust themselves upon his notice. And when at length his heart was softened, and his spirit bowed to seek the Lord, the words spoken by that gentle mother in the nursery, long years before, came sounding in his ears again, as words of power, and life, and purity.[1]

[1] W. Lindsay Alexander, *Christian Thought and Work*, 268.

# The Buying and Selling of the Truth.

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## The Buying and Selling of the Truth.

**Buy the truth, and sell it not;**
**Yea, wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.—Prov. xxiii. 23.**

1. "Buy the truth, and sell it not." Wedged in between warnings against the evil effects that attend gluttony and drunkenness come these startling words, a ray of sheer idealism, which lights up the whole page. Here are no calculations of profit as it is understood in the market-place and the counting-house; here is no commendation of virtue on the ground that experience shows it to pay better in the long run than its opposite, nor the spirit which declares honesty to be the best policy,—a maxim which might have been penned by any convicted pickpocket,—but truth is praised for its own sake as a supreme possession, to be acquired and not to be parted with on any consideration; it is like that pearl of great price which a merchant found, and in exchange for which he gave all that he had.

2. Shakespeare has told us that "all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." It would have been much more true to say that all the world is a market, and all the men and women buyers and sellers. Every day is a market-day, and every evening brings its balance-sheet to us: things bought and things sold, with the net gain, or, it may be, loss. Foolish people are always selling the better things for the worse; while the wise buy the more precious and enduring things, at the cost of that which they can more easily part with. The foolish sell the substance for the shadow, and the wise sell the shadow for the substance; that is the main difference between the two.

## I.

### A Thing of Value.

#### "The Truth."

"Buy the truth, and sell it not; yea, wisdom, and instruction, and understanding." The second clause gives the sphere in which truth moves, or the three properties which appertain to it. These are: wisdom, practical knowledge; instruction, moral culture and discipline; and understanding, the faculty of discernment.

1. First, then, the treasure set before us here as worth obtaining is the truth. The truth has a perpetual charm for every soul that is true. Over all souls she wields a mystic power; all must bow to her authority, whether they love her or not. She has a Divine right to command, to direct, to judge, to condemn and to acquit. She is the only possessor of such a right. There is, indeed, no authority that can make itself felt by man save that which comes to him in the guise of truth. The truth is not merely intellectual but moral and practical as well. To seek truth wherever she may be found, to follow truth wherever she leads, to do truth whatever the consequences, may be said to sum up the whole duty of man. Therefore, "whatsoever things are true" may well be the primary subjects of our thought and meditation and practice.

¶ Let no promise of reward, however great, tempt you from that generous and uncalculating loyalty to truth which holds that any sacrifice made on its altar is worth making, that nothing which is purchased at the cost of truth is worth the prize. If you are called to the office of a teacher or preacher of truth—and what vocation can be higher?—see that it is the truth as you yourself have learned to see it, and not somebody else's truth, that you give your fellows. The secret of success in the communication of truth, as in all true success in life, is to be yourself, as the secret of failure is concealment and repression of one's own selfhood—the seeming to be what one is not. The life of imitation, as Plato said, is the life of evil. The good life, the true life, is always original. Such fidelity to truth you will find to be its own reward, as unfaithfulness is its own penalty. To sell the truth is to arrest the movement of your intellectual life, to kill the faculty of further

insight. To cherish the truth you know is to keep the eyes of your mind open to the larger vision of truth which the future has in store for you, to remain a seeker, and therefore a finder, of truth in all the days to come. Be loyal to your convictions, at whatever cost; beware of disloyalty to truth.[1]

2. There are three kinds of truth. That is to say, truth is to be sought in three different spheres of life.

(1) First there is *civil truth*, which exists and prevails in all the civil business of society—the truth which man speaks to man: "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour." This is the truth that is so highly thought of, and so valued, both in public and in private life, as it is so indispensable to the due discharge of the duties of life; and so great is considered the insult of affixing upon man the imputation of speaking contrary to truth that life is often risked to repel the charge; and not only that, but is frequently sacrificed to wipe away the stain. This does not seem to be the truth spoken of in the text, although, perhaps, it is part of it. It extends from it, as the branch from the tree; it flows from it, as the streamlet from the fountain; but it is not altogether it.

¶ Truth is the very bond of society, without which it must cease to exist, and dissolve into anarchy and chaos. A household cannot be governed by lying; nor can a nation. Sir Thomas Browne once was asked, "Do the devils lie?" "No," was his answer; "for then even hell could not subsist." No considerations can justify the sacrifice of truth, which ought to be sovereign in all the relations of life. Of all mean vices, perhaps lying is the meanest. It is in some cases the offspring of perversity and vice, and in many others of sheer moral cowardice. There was no virtue that Dr. Arnold of Rugby laboured more sedulously to instil into young men than the virtue of truthfulness, as being the manliest of virtues, as indeed the very basis of all true manliness. He designated truthfulness as "moral transparency," and he valued it more highly than any other quality. When lying was detected, he treated it as a great moral offence; but when a pupil made an assertion, he accepted it with confidence. "If you say so, that is quite enough; of course I believe your word." By thus trusting and believing them, he educated the young in truthfulness; the boys at length coming to say to one another: "It's a shame to tell Arnold a lie—he always believes one."[2]

[1] J. Seth, *Graduation Address to Students.*

[2] S. Smiles, *Character*, 206.

(2) There is a second kind of truth—*philosophical truth*, or an inquiry into the causes of nature, which is drawn and gathered from observation of the works of God, and which those who rank high in the learned world aim at possessing to such an extent that in quest of it they spare neither trouble, time, toil, nor expense. They sail to foreign climes, traverse distant lands—

Scorn delights, and live laborious days;

but if the discoveries which they make be found, on experiment, to be contrary to truth, then they are constrained to suffer a sort of degradation in their character, as men of literature and science, and to come down from the elevated station which they had occupied before. This does not, either, seem to be the truth spoken of in the text.

¶ What is there within the circle of human possessions which has had its value so extolled by the most gifted of men as Truth? There is an admitted nobility in the love of it, a high distinction in the search for it. To admit this is to acknowledge the importance of science and philosophy; and from the exceeding worth of truth philosophy receives its high distinction. However laboriously and cautiously reached, philosophic doctrines are of no value except in so far as they are capable of being verified. There are no dogmas, whether scientific, philosophic, or theologic, which have a right to live on any other condition than the acknowledgment of their truth. Popular error holds its place only on account of the absence of scientific criticism, which is the expression of intellectual activity. The strength, beauty, and value of truth are most clearly recognized when all society is stirred to interest in the whole range of inquiry, and in the critical testing of dogmas of all sorts. The love of truth is the true philosophic spirit; search after it is the philosopher's task.[1]

(3) There is a third kind of truth,—*moral or spiritual truth*,—the truth which regards God as a Sovereign, and man as an immortal, accountable being; "the truth as it is in Jesus," which truth is gathered in all its fulness, purity, and excellence, only from the Scriptures, the Word of God.

¶ The truth here meant is that which St. Augustine calleth *legem omnium artium, et artem omnipotentis Artificis*, "a law to direct all arts, an art taught by Wisdom itself, by the Maker of all things." It teacheth us to love God with all our hearts, to believe in Him, and to lead upright lives. It killeth in us the

[1] Henry Calderwood.

root of sin, it extinguisheth all lusts, it maketh us tread under foot pleasure and honour and wealth; it rendereth us deaf to the noise of this busy world, and blind to that glaring pomp which dazzleth the eyes of others. *Hâc præeunte seculi fluctus calcamus*: "It goeth before us in our way, and through all the surges of this present world" it bringeth us to the vision and fruition of Him who is Truth itself.[1]

¶ Phillips Brooks refused to give the intellect in man the supremacy when taken by itself. In speaking of the Person of Christ, he asks the questions: How does Christ compare in intellectual power with other men? How did He estimate the intellect? Was His intellect sufficient to account for the unique position He holds in the world's history as the mightiest force that has controlled the development of humanity? He finds the answer by turning to the Fourth Gospel, which gives us most that we know about the mind of Jesus. It is the intellectual Gospel, because there is one constantly recurring word—"truth," which is distinctly a word of the intellect. But in the Fourth Gospel, in every instance, it is employed in a sense different from that of the schools. In its scholastic use it is detached from life and made synonymous with knowledge. But knowledge is no word of Jesus. With information for the head alone, detached from its relations to the whole nature, Jesus has no concern. Truth was something which set the whole man free. It was a moral thing, for he who does not receive it is not merely a doubter, but a liar. Truth was something which a man could be, not merely something which a man could study and measure by walking around it on the outside. The objective and the subjective lose themselves in each other. Truth can be known only from the inside; it is something moral, something living, something spiritual. It is not mere objective unity; it must have in it the elements of character. "To this end was I born," says Jesus, "and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."[2]

## II.

### The Way to Obtain It.

**"Buy the Truth."**

The truth cannot be purchased with money. The highest things are not marketable; they are like the wine and milk of

[1] A. Farindon, *Sermons*, ii. 379.

[2] A. V. G. Allen, *Phillips Brooks: Memories of His Life*, 321.

which Isaiah wrote—"without money and without price." The power of money, though enormously great, is limited, and does not yet control the whole field human and Divine. You cannot buy brains and genius, however much money you have; or the poet's vision, the artist's touch, the ear for music, the gift of song. You cannot buy a good name, a stainless reputation, an easy conscience, or a pair of honest eyes. You cannot buy a big manly heart, or the faith of a little child. You cannot buy happiness; above all things, it runs away from the possessor of millions. You cannot buy a good man's trust or a good woman's love; still less can you buy self-respect, or the right to pray, or a place in Christ's living Church and the inheritance of His saints.

¶ All the best things are given away. Do we realize what a ghost and travesty of possession lurks in the act of purchase? You can buy a book of poems: the soft bindings are yours, the gilt edges are yours, the hand-made paper is yours, but not the poetry. No man was ever rich enough to buy a poem. If it is his, he must have it as the unpurchasable gift of God to his soul. And as surely as you cannot buy a poem, so you cannot buy a home, or a happy hour, or a good conscience, or a rich hope. Trite old story, yes, but we must go on telling it till the vital truth it implies has fashioned the practices of the world. And it can, for the positive side of this teaching is the doctrine of grace—God's mercy for the undeserving, His treasure for the poor, His fulness for the empty. The wealth of our lives is the love that brings the vision beautiful and welds men heart to heart, the sympathy that gives insight, the faith and hope that enrich the spirit, the morning joy of Jesus in the souls of them that crown Him and the lives of them that serve Him.[1]

1. In one aspect the truth is always seeking to reach us. All truth is of the nature of revelation. But just as there must be eyes formed to behold the objects in the world around us, so there must be an inner eye that looks out for and seeks to read the revelation. The revelation is not wholly in the objects, but also in what they indicate. Science describes the objects, but the mind seeks the truth that they reveal. Sometimes the truth comes to us, dawns upon us, shines on us, without any conscious effort of our own or immediate seeking on our part:

[1] P. C. Ainsworth, *The Pilgrim Church*, 56.

Think ye 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?

This is intuition; but it does not come miraculously; there has been a long preparation for it in the race and often also in the individual.

¶ A modern philosophical writer (Eucken), with much knowledge of past endeavours after the truth, tells us that we must seek it in a new way. We must seek it, primarily, not without but within ourselves, not as a matter of the intellect merely, or of any one or more faculties alone, but of the life, as something belonging to a higher and wider Life which is seeking to realize itself in us. No doubt what is thus said is true. But it implies a distinction or contrast between the actual and the ideal, and that there is a faculty in man capable of perceiving the ideal. In what other way could we possibly know what the higher and wider Life moves us to? The ideal, however, is not a mere intellectual perception; there is also a sense or feeling of what is true and good, and an attraction that draws us upward towards itself. That there is a higher Life seeking to live in us, Christianity also teaches.[1]

¶ One of the most interesting parts of the *Pilgrim's Progress* is that in which Christian and Faithful come to Vanity Fair, crowded with merry people, all engaged in buying trifles. "That which did not a little amuse the merchants was that these pilgrims set very light by their wares, they cared not so much as to look upon them: and if they called upon them to buy, they would put their fingers in their ears and cry, 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.' One chanced mockingly, beholding the carriage of the men, to say unto them, 'What will ye buy?' But they, looking gravely upon him, said, 'We buy the truth.'"[2]

2. What is meant, then, by saying that the truth has to be bought—"Buy the truth, and sell it not; yea, wisdom, and instruction, and understanding"? The highest things have to be bought, not with money—indeed, they are above price; but you cannot have them without cost, expenditure, sacrifice. To buy is to give up something that you value in exchange for something that you desire more, covet more, and perhaps need more. It is right,

[1] W. L. Walker, *The True Christ*, 18. [2] J. Jeffrey, *The Way of Life*, 254.

which Isaiah wrote—"without money and without price." The power of money, though enormously great, is limited, and does not yet control the whole field human and Divine. You cannot buy brains and genius, however much money you have; or the poet's vision, the artist's touch, the ear for music, the gift of song. You cannot buy a good name, a stainless reputation, an easy conscience, or a pair of honest eyes. You cannot buy a big manly heart, or the faith of a little child. You cannot buy happiness; above all things, it runs away from the possessor of millions. You cannot buy a good man's trust or a good woman's love; still less can you buy self-respect, or the right to pray, or a place in Christ's living Church and the inheritance of His saints.

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then, to say that all good and Divine things must be bought. Our great Master likened the Kingdom of Heaven to a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. And the Apostle Paul, quite in the spirit of that parable, declared that he had suffered the loss of all things to win Christ—that is, he had sold all the other things to buy Christ, and got Him cheap at that sacrifice.

(1) We have all to buy what this writer calls wisdom, for it can be gained only in the school of experience, and the fees in that school are high. Wisdom is never inherited, never bequeathed or transmitted from father to son. Everyone has to buy it for himself in a dear market. This writer, in the preceding verse, counts the father happy who begetteth a wise child; but that is impossible. His child may grow up into a wise man, but he is never born wise. A man may be born clever, talented, a genius, a poet; he may be born rich, heir to an estate, a title, or a throne; but he is never born wise. He has to buy wisdom at a big price. Some of our young people may be a great deal smarter than their fathers, much more up-to-date, as they say, and, by virtue of their superior education, far more knowing in book matters. But they cannot, in the nature of things, be quite as wise as their fathers, unless, indeed, the fathers are mentally deficient; and even then, there is at least a probability that the sons will take after them; because wisdom can be acquired only in the rough and painful school of experience. The buying of wisdom writes wrinkles and furrows on our faces, and heavy lines of care on our poor hearts. We buy wisdom with many a rebuff, humbling, and disappointment, with costly blunders and heartache, sad hours, and sometimes a bit of heart-break. We are buying wisdom all our lives, and often it comes to us only as the end approaches. That is the pathos of life. We often wish that we could have the wisdom sooner, before the twilight creeps on. It would make our lives so much happier and more useful; but it comes only in time to use the greater part of it in the higher service, where, no doubt, it will be needed. Well might this writer say: "Buy wisdom." We have all to buy it.

¶ On November 15, Principal Tulloch gave his opening lecture at St. Mary's College. My record of the day says "really very

splendid." These brilliant addresses were discourses on some ecclesiastical or theological topic, which had become matter of current interest. And a few days after they had been read in St. Mary's College, you might often find them in some Review or Magazine. But they were always stimulating: as the prelections of a humdrum professor never could be. And a special pathos was sometimes in them, if Tulloch was at the time in one of those dark moods of which Mrs. Oliphant's biography most truly tells. Well I remember the audible hush, once, when the Principal looked up from his lecture (he always sat to lecture) and said, as last words, "Gentlemen, you will not fully understand these things till you have been taught them by experience or till your lot has been plowed by the furrows of sorrow." Somehow, what Tulloch said always *got home* wonderfully. Adaptation was perfect.[1]

(2) It is equally certain that we have to buy character, reputation, and an honoured and trusted name. There is no market in the world where these can be picked up cheap. You can buy a tawdry reputation, a short-lived popularity or notoriety, at a very costless price, just as you can buy sham jewels for a few coppers from any pedlar in the streets. But to win a name which will keep its white, stainless honour through the wear and tear of years; to win the enduring respect of *good* men (and there is no other respect worth a straw); to win the daily and the final "Well done" of the Great Judge—that is never a costless business. It means the persistent climbing of the rugged hill of duty; it means the daily fight with temptation; the daily treading down of self-indulgent ease; the daily sacrifice in the service of friends and fellow-men; and the constant plodding on in the straight path, swerving not to right or left through evil repute and good. If we cannot face that music and endure that discipline, we shall never win the prize. The good and honoured name does not drop into our lap as a gift of fortune. It must be dearly bought.

¶ Turn your energies towards your moral cultivation. In doing so you will accumulate imperishable riches. All that your worldly care can bring will be the doubtful possession of riches of doubtful value. In the possession of the moral wealth of a noble and disciplined character, you possess that which can neither wither nor be stolen. What we have we must leave at

[1] A. K. H. B. Boyd, *Twenty-Five Years of St. Andrews*, i. 126.

the threshold of the grave. What we are goes with us into the other world. Riches will drop from our dying hand into the grasp of others. Character passes with us into the presence of God. Character is everything. This, rather than worldly riches, is the true end of life. The perfecting of this is the true purpose of God in life.[1]

(3) We must also buy the higher and richer experiences of the Christian life. Some people talk smoothly, and even glibly, about the life of holiness, the "higher life," as if it could be reached easily by a simple act of trust. It is not to be attained in that way. It means sacrifice. The higher life always means giving up things we like and love for the sake of God and our fellow-men. The religion which costs us nothing in time, thought, labour, or money, is not worth picking up in the streets. Most people pay as much for their religion as it is worth, especially if they pay very little, because in that case it is worth so little. The Bible cannot be God's book to us, full of rich teaching and comfort, unless we take the trouble to read it often and prayerfully. We cannot understand the helpfulness and mighty power of prayer unless we steal time from our manifold engagements, to commune with God in prayer. We cannot enjoy the communion of saints unless we sacrifice our petty prides, snobberies, and mighty regard for class-distinctions. We cannot realize the sweets of Divine forgiveness unless we renounce our grudges, unreasonable dislikes, and our own unwillingness to forgive; and we cannot have Christ as our Companion and Comforter unless every day we try to do not our own will but His. Every advance towards the higher life involves sacrifice. It costs nothing to descend; it is always costly to ascend.

¶ "Never fear to let go," he says in his philosophical notes; "It is the only means of getting better things,—self-sacrifice. Let go; let go; we are sure to get back again. How science teaches the lesson of morals, which is ever, Give up, give up; deny yourself,—not this everlasting getting; deny yourself, and give, and infinitely more shall be yours; but *give*—not bargaining; give from love, because you must. And if the question will intrude, 'What shall I have, if I give up this?' relegate that question to faith, and answer, 'I shall have God. In my giving, in my love, God, who is Love, gives Himself to me.'"[2]

[1] Bishop W. Boyd Carpenter.

[2] *Life and Letters of James Hinton*, 206.

3. The price we have to pay often amounts to the heart's blood. It is not only truth in the sense of knowledge that we want, but, above all, truth, in action, in our relationships to each other, in our relation to God; and for such truth we pay no less a price than life itself—not by laying it down in one act of renunciation, but by making it one continuous act of dedication. We must practise what is by no means easy—an entire and resolute candour with ourselves, a strict scrutiny of our own motives; we must exercise an untiring watchfulness over the springs of conduct; we must, in one word, buy the truth by being true in thought and word and deed. Right opinions are very good and are worth having, but right opinions by themselves have never yet saved a soul. We do not buy saving truth by paying a stipulated amount across a celestial counter once, and then carrying it away with us; we have to keep on paying, day by day, hour by hour, and the price is nothing less than life—gentle, upright, courageous, equitable, dutiful, generous, forgiving. That alone is the true life, and we have not only to know the truth, but to live it.

¶ There is no story of modern times that shows such a perfect blending of courage, serenity, and self-consecration to truth as the life of Bishop Colenso, the pioneer of the scientific study of the Old Testament in the English-speaking world. He had everything to gain by keeping his unorthodox conclusions to himself, and everything to lose by making them public; he had, after all, only to keep quiet on this one topic, full as his life was of other interests; but I do not think it ever occurred to him to shield himself or to save his career in the Church by cowardly silence. You remember his own account of the circumstances which first turned his mind to Old Testament criticism: "While translating the story of the Flood, I have had a simple-minded but intelligent native look up and ask, 'Is all that true? Do you really believe that all this happened so—that all the beasts and birds and creeping things upon the earth, large and small, from hot countries and cold, came thus by pairs and entered into the ark with Noah? And did Noah gather food for them all, for the beasts and birds of prey, as well as for the rest?' My heart answered in the words of the prophet, 'Shall a man speak lies in the name of the Lord?' I dared not do so." Reckless and malicious attacks, virtual deposition from his office, a general boycott followed, but could not deter him from following along the path he believed,

and rightly believed, to be the true one. "I trust," he wrote, "that I duly reverence both the Church and the Bible. But the truth is above both"; and the one thing that pained him was to see how little love of truth there was among those from whom he had hoped most. Well, he bore the obloquy, the isolation, the loss inflicted upon him by bigotry, and to-day the views for which he suffered are those of educated people everywhere; but it was he and such as he who paid the price of truth, and the least we can do is to cherish the possessions they bought at such a cost.[1]

## III.

### The Folly of Bartering It.

**"Sell it not."**

What does selling the truth mean? It means giving up that which we know to be right for some pleasure or advantage in this world. Every temptation is a persuasion to sell the truth. The devil says, If you will give up this or that good habit or good resolution, I will give you this or that pleasure. Moses, when he was come to years, chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt."

¶ When Ahab came to Naboth to procure from him his vineyard, "Give me," saith he, "thy vineyard, and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or I will give thee the worth of it in money" (1 Kings xxi. 2). See here three mighty tempters—the king, money, and commodity; whereof which is the strongest, it is hard to determine: the weakest of them prevaileth with most men. Notwithstanding, Naboth holdeth out against them all: "The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee."[2]

1. It is hard to buy the truth, and easy to sell it. It is always easy to sell the best and highest things. In the ordinary market the rule is the other way: it is easy to buy, and hard to sell. Everybody welcomes the buyer and meets him with respectful

[1] J. Warschauer, *The Way of Understanding*, 97.
[2] A. Farindon, *Sermons*, ii. 431.

salutes; but the seller is often sent off with a churlish "No." In the moral and spiritual market, however, it is hard to buy and easy to sell. There are always numerous buyers bidding against each other in their eagerness to buy what we are prepared to sell. It is easy to sell one's spiritual birthright for a morsel of meat. There are scores of Jacobs lying in wait ready to help us to that transaction. It is easy to sell our principles and convictions for some paltry bribe, some pecuniary or social advantage. It is easy to sell our veracity or our honesty, to make people think more highly of us, or to secure additional gain. It is easy for young men to sell all their chances in this world and the world to come for the excitements of the drink-shop, the betting-ring, and the lewdnesses of the streets. It is easy for young fools to sell the Bible, the faith, and all the truths for which the martyrs died, just to gain the cheap reputation of being modern, up-to-date, independent free-thinkers, and that other fools may pat them on the back and tell them how clever they are. And it is easy to sell the last rewarding sentence of the Great Judge and King for the paltry toy, the painted gewgaws of the prince of this world.

2. When we sell the truth we always make a bad bargain, just as in buying the truth we always make a good bargain. In all other bargains, the gain of one party is loss to the other, but in this bargain there is only gain and no loss at all; the buyer gains, and yet no seller loses. So the sale of the truth is of all bargains the worst and the most foolish. For in other sales, although somebody may lose, yet somebody gains. But when the truth is sold, there is nothing but mere loss; no man is, no man can be, the better for the sale of the truth:

Vendentem tantum deserit et minuit:

"Only the seller grows the worse; there is no buyer grows the better."

¶ Man parted with the truth of God in the garden of Eden, when he believed the lies of the devil, and disobeyed the strict injunction of his Maker. Then was the truth lost, then was it "sold," and with it man lost the dignity of his nature—the brightness of his future hopes and prospects, and the peace and happiness of his mind. The command had been of the simplest nature—"Thou shalt not eat of it, neither shalt thou touch it, lest thou

die." But the disobeying of that simple command entailed consequences the most terrible; he *did* eat, and the great poet of England sketches the result, even to inanimate nature, in a picture, perhaps, not at all overdrawn:—

> Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat,
> Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe
> That all was lost. . . .
> Sky loured, and, muttering thunder, some sad drops
> Wept at completing of the mortal sin
> Original.

And what did man get in return for his sale of the truth? He got a dark and clouded intellect, an alienated and corrupted heart, and a soul dead in trespasses and sin. He got all the misery, wretchedness, and woe that have been since blighting earth, and earth's fairest scenes, and which still appear in the dark prospective opening of eternity; and he got the beauteous work of creation, that had hitherto lain smiling under the sunshine of Heaven's blessing, blasted by the withering curse of the Great Eternal.[1]

3. The man who cannot see the priceless value of truth is always capable of selling it. That is the logic of history. That is the tragedy of materialism. Judas sold his honour, his place in the brotherhood, the great trust of his life, and the very love of God. Men little think what impiety, treachery, and shame lurk beneath the materialistic appraisement of life. This is peculiarly a peril of the city. Those who till the soil and wait in field and garden for God's sunshine and His rain have all about them a sacrament of the priceless things. But those who dwell in the city, amid so much that is artificial, so much that is not easily suggestive of the unseen sources and spiritual values of life, may perhaps think themselves in special danger of judging earthly judgments. But, after all, whether a man drive a ploughshare or drive a bargain, there is but one way of escape from the peril of the earthly view and the earthly valuation—a peril never far from the hearts of the children of men. And that is in the evangel of the grace of God.

¶ Art has fought in vain with the coarse and stubborn materialism of the world. Æstheticism, with its eclectic discipleship and

[1] J. Gregg, *The Life of Faith*, 76.

its demand for a measure of intellectual refinement, has never been able to make the plea for the priceless a real factor in the life of a workaday world. Only Christ can do that. In His cross He has revealed life to us as the priceless gift of God to every humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling.

If once a man has come empty-handed to the mercy of God in Christ; if day by day he stretches out these same empty hands to the Giver of life; if his heart has tasted of the fulness awaiting him beyond the voices of the market and the pledges of the world—then beauty and truth and love and all the spiritual reality of life are his, and the basal plea for the priceless is for ever wakened and answered in his soul.[1]

¶ The state of perfect love, expressing itself in perfect rightness of thought and deed, may be unattainable on earth, but nothing lower than the search for this ideal can satisfy the yearnings of a soul such as was Florence Nightingale's. She had the *Hunger for Righteousness*. "The crown of *righteousness*!" she wrote to Miss Nicholson (May 1846). "That word always strikes me more than anything in the Bible. Strange that not happiness, not rest, not forgiveness, not glory, should have been the thought of that glorious man's mind, when at the eve of the last and greatest of his labours; all desires so swallowed up in the one great craving after *righteousness* that, at the end of all his struggles, it was mightier within him than ever, mightier even than the desire of peace. How can people tell one to dwell within a good conscience, when the chief of all the apostles so panted after righteousness that he considered it the last best gift, unattainable on earth, to be bestowed in Heaven?" [2]

[1] P. C. Ainsworth, *The Pilgrim Church*, 59.
[2] Sir Edward Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, i. 51.

# The Golden Mean.

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## The Golden Mean.

**Give me neither poverty nor riches;**
**Feed me with the food that is needful for me.—Prov. xxx. 8.**

This is the prayer of Agur, the son of Jakeh. Of Agur himself we know nothing, except that he seems to have been the author, or editor, of the short collection of pithy sayings contained in this chapter, including this prayer. We do not know the circumstances out of which the prayer was spoken. We do not know whether his request was granted to him. But we shall all agree that it is one of the sanest and most prudent prayers ever put on record. The prayer reveals the man, and we may judge from it that Agur was a somewhat shy, diffident, cautious man, the kind of man who would rather have the middle of a safe highway than the risky excitements of peak and precipice.

¶ Supposing that our private prayers, like the Private Devotions of Launcelot Andrewes, could be given to the world after we are dead and gone, what sort of appearance should we present to posterity? It is well that the prayers of most of us are heard only by God, who is very merciful, who is very silent and keeps our secrets well, who is too wise to grant all the requests of His ignorant and foolish children.[1]

### I.

### The Extremes of Fortune.

**"Give me neither poverty nor riches."**

1. The one extreme from which he shrinks is wealth. We are confronted at the outset by much misunderstanding as to what is wealth, and what is poverty. Vast numbers of poor people consider other people rich because they live in larger houses and

[1] J. M. E. Ross.

spend more money and live more luxuriously than themselves. Now it is strictly true that a great many persons who are thus reputed to be rich are in reality poor; they are really unable without great care to make both ends meet. The expenses to which by their position they are inevitably exposed are either only barely covered by their incomes, or they have to make up large deficiencies by annual draughts on their capital. On the other hand, many among the so-called rich make a great mistake in exaggerating the wants and miseries of the so-called poor. They often pity people who live on a lower pecuniary level than their own, but who are yet able without any pinching or privation to live very comfortably and to pay their way and even to put by annually a moderate share of their earnings. Such as these are not poor at all, even though they are not rich. The envy of poor men towards the rich and the pity of rich men towards the poor are alike often grossly misplaced, and if they did but know the secrets of each other's lives the envy and the pity would be reversed, the poor would pity the rich and the rich would envy the poor.

(1) *Wealth is not an evil in itself.*—There is no reproach in wishing, by one's own honourable exertions, to rise from the ranks of ill-paid or slenderly-paid labour, to make and keep a comfortable home for those nearest to one, to have no need for material anxieties, to have a margin for books, for music, for travel, to be able to contribute to religious causes and help to support this or that movement one has at heart. To be able to do these things is a very creditable ambition; to take that ambition away would be to cut at the very root of civilized society. The duty of industry, on which the writers of Proverbs so strongly insist, is reinforced by the reflection, "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich." The reader is admonished to lay by for the inevitable rainy day, when some extra resources will be wanted and be found to make all the difference, in an aphorism like the following: "The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty." And lest a man should rely overmuch on his own powers and the strength of his own exertions, and forget the Giver of all, we read: "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow therewith." Now in all

this there is a perfectly undisguised appreciation of ownership and its solid satisfactions: to be out of the reach of carking care, of sordid anxieties, so that a man may have his energies free for something else than the dreary struggle to make ends meet—this is, in the frankest manner, held up as a consummation devoutly to be wished, and the counsel of these old-time sages is that men may take thought to attain it.

¶ Ruskin compares wealth to a river. There are rivers which overflow their banks and create malarial swamps that load the air with pestilence, while they might, by engineering skill, be directed and controlled so as to bring a blessing instead of a curse. So, he says, wealth may be "water of life," or, if it is not wisely used, it may be "the last and deadliest of all plagues."[1]

¶ It is worth while remembering that the gentle Charles Lamb, who was as far as anyone could be from a passion for riches, saw in money the equivalent of "health and liberty and strength," while Plato could soberly state that "the possession of wealth contributes greatly to truth and honesty." You have only to put it to yourselves negatively—the lives of men, women, and children that might be saved year-in and year-out but for the lack of means to purchase medical attendance, strengthening diet, sojourn in a sanatorium—to appreciate Lamb's point of view; it is perfectly true, and why not admit it, that there are hundreds of thousands of deserving folk in this land of ours who would say—and that in respect of a very trifling increase of income—

> Oh the little more, and how much it is!
> And the little less, and what worlds away![2]

(2) *But the possession of wealth is a constant peril.*—Living in continual enjoyment of those luxuries and pleasures which wealth procures tends to cultivate the animal rather than the spiritual part of our nature. Satisfaction with the good things of life, as they are called, has a tendency to make the soul slumber and forget its immortal obligations to itself. If we have all we want, we shall seek and find pleasure only in those things which wealth can purchase. We cannot easily rise above the low ground of animal desire and gratification. Our thoughts and actions are so engrossed in finding fresh avenues for indulgence or excitement that we have little energy left for spiritual and moral aspirations. Then, further, this constant indulgence brings with it a sense of

[1] J. M. E. Ross. [2] J. Warschauer, *The Way of Understanding*, 67.

independence, an unmanly pride, a habit of trusting only in ourselves and in our own resources, which destroys, in time, all sense of dependence on others and on God. Agur felt this when he prayed, "Give me not riches, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?" Our wealth is apt to take the very place of God in our heart's love and trust. Our money, and not God, is in all our thoughts. We are happy because it is there and seems safe and inexhaustible. We reckon our lives by what we enjoy through its means, and not by any progress or growth of the soul. Whenever wealth is to us of supreme importance, be sure it is eating out the very vitals of our spiritual life.

¶ In a remarkable work entitled *The Tree in the Midst*, Dr. Greville MacDonald has recently furnished a striking illustration of the truth that Nature is against the luxury that preys upon society. He gives an account of the process of evolution and the secondary laws which it involves; and in speaking of luxury, he takes as an example the prehistoric monster known as the ichthyosaurus. The ichthyosaurus was one of a whole series of creatures, horrible in character, function, and form, which existed in an early stage of the earth's history. It was a reptilian fish, thirty feet in length, with the backbone and tail of a fish, the jaw of a crocodile, and the skin of a whale. Its eye was held in a socket eighteen inches in diameter and was protected by an armour of bony plates. It had a most extraordinary range of vision, and it could see in the dark. This monster, therefore, was highly gifted. It was, in fact, actually in advance of its age. It had points of advantage not existent in any other creature at that time. It anticipated the higher possibilities in structure. It was far on in the line of evolution. Why, then, did it disappear? Why was not the process of evolution continued along that line? Why is it now an extinct creature, telling us its story only by the petrified remains of its terrible body which are dug out from its rocky grave? Most significant is the answer to this question. It died out because life was too easy for it. The world did not desire it. It did nothing but feed and propagate its kind; and it did this with no effort on its own behalf. It was undesirable from the point of view of upward evolution. That this was the truth concerning it is proved by its remains. There is evidence of its swallowing fish and reptiles in quantity far larger than it could digest, far larger than could be necessary for its own maintenance and the transmission of its species. Its awful jaw, its enormous stomach, its impenetrable armour, its great fleetness, made other

creatures such an easy prey to it that labour or painful effort was an experience it never knew. Its only enemies were its prey; and these enemies were altogether powerless to resist it, while its food was always superabundant. And so the ichthyosaurus died out. It died of too much ease. Its extinction was the inevitable result of its luxury. Vital energy began to ebb; structural refinement did not increase, because it was not wanted; the size and strength of the monster meant diminished need for intelligence, and the ascent of intelligence was checked. Nature was against it. It transgressed the fundamental law of upward-moving life, and it was swept into the limbo of forgotten things.[1]

(3) *Money creates wants as well as meets them.*—As a rule, "where goods increase, they are increased that eat them." The more a man has, the more he is called to part with; and the deeper his pocket, the more constant is the drain upon it. The more possessions a man has to carry with him through life, the weightier is his burden, not the lighter. History tells us that the Spartans at one time had a practice of coining all their money in iron, that so the people might be discouraged from avarice by feeling that every addition to their money meant an added weight to bear. How true are the wise man's words when he says that the abundance of the rich man's possessions "will not suffer him to sleep." For money, if itself "a defence," also requires a defence for its safe-keeping. And with all his watchfulness a man cannot sometimes prevent his "riches making themselves wings and flying away." Wealth at the worst is a source of danger, at the best a source of care.

¶ I do not know nor desire to know if theologians have yet come to a scientific conclusion with regard to the poverty of Jesus, but it seems evident to me that poverty with the labour of the hands is the ideal held up by the Galilean to the efforts of His disciples. Still it is easy to see that Franciscan poverty is neither to be confounded with the unfeeling pride of the stoic, nor with the stupid horror of all joy felt by certain devotees; St. Francis renounced everything only that he might the better possess everything. The lives of the immense majority of our contemporaries are ruled by the fatal error that the more one possesses the more one enjoys. Our exterior, civil liberties continually increase, but at the same time our inward freedom is

[1] H. Rix, *Sermons, Addresses, and Essays*, 161.

taking flight; how many are there among us who are literally possessed by what they possess?[1]

2. The other extreme that Agur would be delivered from is poverty. The thought is of dire poverty, of sheer destitution, or, at least, of that precarious livelihood that is always on the verge of want, and is therefore oppressed with the ever-haunting fear of the distress which can never be quite out of sight.

(1) Poverty has this great advantage over wealth, that it compels to honest labour, it guards and protects the soul from the thousand vices of idleness by pre-occupying the heart and hands with good wholesome work; the body healthfully wearied by honest toil, even if it be never so hard, is rewarded by peaceful slumber when the day's work is done. "The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep." It is no curse indeed, but the greatest blessing ever sent upon an ignorant and childish world, to be forced to labour that we may eat.

But the thought in the text is the evil influence of extreme poverty on character. There are currents of influence that originate in the material environment of a man's life and yet flow in upon his very soul, helping or hindering his spiritual life. Man has a body and a soul; at least, so we roughly and popularly divide his complex nature. But body and soul are not independent; they act and react upon each other. Spiritual coldness may sometimes have its physical causes. We may, Faber says, "attribute to the wiles of Satan what is really a matter of nerves or of digestion"; and a body that is either pampered and indulged or ailing and emaciated and fatigued may have a depressing effect upon the moral life. It is only stating the same truth a little more broadly to say that a man's temporal circumstances may influence for good or evil his spiritual prosperity; you cannot draw a sharp line of cleavage between temporal and spiritual affairs any more than you can between body and soul. And we may find in the outward circumstances of our lives some of the stepping-stones by which we rise to heaven, or some of the temptations that drag us to destruction.

There is an extreme of poverty which seems as unfavourable

[1] P. Sabatier, *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, 126.

to the higher life as the extreme of riches. It may be such as to expose one to almost irresistible temptation, "lest I be poor and steal." If food and warmth are not obtainable by honest means, is it wonderful that poor souls sometimes take a short cut and transgress? And even if that gross temptation is avoided, temptation comes in other forms, more subtle but equally strong. The constant anxiety, the ceaseless worry, the endless battle with the wolf at the door, may create a weary, listless, hopeless frame of mind that has not energy enough to respond to the call of God.

(2) Poverty fosters bitterness. The poor are tempted to blaspheme; not always, perhaps, against Him whom they call "God," but against the Divine order of the universe which permits so fearful a thing as starvation or want. The world seems all wrong. Man is hard and cold, and the very universe seems cold and hard as well. There is no pity in the heavens. The soul of the poor is embittered; and that is a dreadful thing, a spiritual disease. You know that a steel spring will stand a certain amount of strain, you may test it up to a certain point, and it will contract, expand, rebound as much as you please. But in every case there is a point of maximum strain; and if you pass that, your spring loses its power to recover itself, it is spoiled for further use. And the human soul also will stand a great many burdens and buffetings; it has a wonderful elasticity of courage, and patience of hope, and power of recuperation. But there seems to be a point beyond which these things are almost impossible, a point where men and women just give in. To change the figure, they are no longer swimmers breasting the current; they are driftwood floating with the stream. Indeed, they can hardly be said even to float; they are utterly submerged by circumstance, and their capacity for faith and hope and spiritual conflict seems to have gone under with them.

¶ Do you remember the passage in *The Saint's Tragedy*, where Count Walter and the Abbot are discussing the condition of the poor? "There," says the Abbot—"there we step in, with the consolations and instructions of the faith." "Ay," answers the Count, "but . . . in the meantime, how will the callow chick, Grace, stand against the tough old game-cock, Hunger?" The question is a pertinent one. It goes without saying that heaven is not made of bread and butter, or of stone and lime, or of parks and recreation grounds, or of anything else that can be purchased

for money or provided by civilization. Good wages and good houses, healthy conditions of work, facilities for education and pleasure, will not necessarily save men from their sins. But the lack of these things tends to the loss of self-respect, the decay of the soul's energy, the stunting of that part of man's nature which lives "by admiration, hope, and love."[1]

¶ To his friend, Mr. C. E. Maurice, Morris writes: "In looking into matters social and political I have but one rule, that in thinking of the condition of any body of men I should ask myself, 'How could you bear it yourself? what would you feel if you were poor against the system under which you live?' I have always been uneasy when I had to ask myself that question, and of late years I have had to ask it so often that I have seldom had it out of my mind: and the answer to it has more and more made me ashamed of my own position, and more and more made me feel that if I had not been born rich or well-to-do I should have found my position *un*endurable, and should have been a mere rebel against what would have seemed to me a system of robbery and injustice. Nothing can argue me out of this feeling, which I say plainly is a matter of religion to me: the contrasts of rich and poor are unendurable and ought not to be endured by either rich or poor. Now it seems to me that, feeling this, I am bound to act for the destruction of the system which seems to me mere oppression and obstruction. I am quite sure that the change which will overthrow our present system will come sooner or later: on the middle classes to a great extent it depends whether it will come peaceably or violently. If they can only learn the uselessness of mere overplus money, the poisonousness of luxury to all civilization, they will not be so likely to cry out 'confiscation and robbery and injustice' at a system which, while it proposes to give to every man what he really *needs*, will have no call to take from any man what he can really *use*: in short, what we of the middle classes have to do, if we can, is to show by our lives what is the proper type of a useful citizen, the type into which all classes should melt at last."[2]

## II.

### The Sufficient Portion.

**"Feed me with the food that is needful for me."**

The literal translation of this clause of the text is, "Give me to eat the bread of my portion—that which by God's providence

[1] J. M. E. Ross. [2] J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris*, ii. 113.

is determined for me." This is not a definite petition for the needs of the coming day, such as we find in the Lord's Prayer, but a casting of one's self on the Divine love, in readiness to take what that love assigns. The Septuagint gives, "Appoint for me what is necessary and what is sufficient."

1. Agur pleads for the golden mean, neither poverty nor riches. It is true that he may serve God in either, but he will serve Him best in that middle state in which he is neither poor nor rich. And it is in this fact that we find the warrant for this prayer of Agur. It is but a lawful desire to wish to serve the Lord under the most favourable conditions. We are not all called to be moral adventurers, craving the post of greatest risk that our fidelity may have the greatest honour. That would savour of spiritual pride. Our undeniable infirmities and Satan's undeniable strength counsel a more modest course than that. When once we have resolved to do our best in any circumstances, we certainly may ask to be favoured with the easiest. Our Lord Himself taught us to pray "Lead us not into temptation," before He added the words "Deliver us from evil." So the prayer of our text is lawful and in every way expedient, "Give us neither poverty nor riches."

¶ William Watson's translation of one of Horace's odes gives Agur's meaning to a nicety:

> Who sees in fortune's golden mean
> All his desires comprised,
> Midway the cot and court between
> Hath well his life devised;
> For riches hath not envied been,
> Nor for their lack, despised.

2. But where is the standard that settles the proper measure of worldly prosperity? The settlement of that question largely decides the value and the applicability of everything that can be said on this engrossing topic. To speak of "neither poverty nor riches" is to speak indefinitely, for men's opinions as to what constitute these two states vary as widely as the poles. What one calls riches another would call poverty. Riches may mean a million a year or a hundred, and poverty a penny a day or a pound.

What is the determining law and the proper point of view? You will find this if you notice the hint this passage gives us as to the proper designation of our property—"Feed me with food convenient for me." The lawfully expanded meaning of these words is—Apportion my possessions to my needs, my means to the ends of my being. And thus we are presented with this truth: A person has the proper measure of temporal wealth when he has sufficient to enable him to do the proper work of life. Thus the question as to what is riches and what poverty is not a question to be decided by either feeling or opinion. That we think we have too little and want more is beside the point. It is the proportion of means to ends that is the question. Our possessions are not simply sources of enjoyment; they are instruments for service. Our business in this world is to do the will of God, and not to please ourselves. Our kind of service, of course, varies—varies almost as widely as do our characters. And as our duty varies, it follows that our necessary means will also vary.

Let no man create all sorts of artificial obligations and unnecessary work, and then protest that his means are unequal to his needs. Let no man thrust himself into a station of life for which he was never intended, and then say he must live up to his position in society. Let him not create all sorts of lofty tastes and extravagant modes of living, and then think himself too poor because his possessions are not equal to these new inflated notions. Our means should be adjusted to our providential lot, not to our factitious circumstances. Life's obligation and life's glory lie in filling the space appointed by God, in doing well the task prescribed by Him, and in making the most, for our own good and the world's, of what He has given us, whether it be little or whether it be much.

3. But the prayer of Agur does not carry us far enough. The ancient world possessed very little idea of causation; the antiquated East of to-day is still almost totally devoid of the idea. The text shows how the matter was regarded in prescientific times. The man of old sought for the roots of poverty and of riches, not in human arrangements or in physical environment, but in the dispensation of God. "Give me," he says, "neither poverty nor riches." Perhaps, on the whole, an

industrious man would be more likely to thrive than a sluggard; but often and often drought or a storm sent by God would cancel all his thrift. It was, after all, God who settled the lot of man. Poverty and riches came from *Him*. For the old Hebrew an omnipotent God held in the hollow of His hand the fate of the individual man. He meted out to him poverty or wealth, with all that these might mean to soul or body.

The modern outlook is different. God in these latter days has revealed Himself as law. He works through Nature and the rules of Nature. He reveals His action as cause and effect. His faithfulness never swerves. There is nothing arbitrary in what He does. We look for the causes, and we know that they will fit the effects. We recognize, too, in these latter days what the ancients did not at all understand—that the individual is the product of society. If we see prevailing poverty, we are certain that it is due to social conditions. If we see overweening and plethoric wealth, we are sure that something in the social system produces or allows it. To us a man is not an isolated person; he is a member of society. God works not only through nature as a whole; He works through humanity as a whole. And so we do not think it sufficient to send up a prayer to God: "Give me neither poverty nor riches"; we know that we must ask why He gives us poverty or riches, and how He is to be prevented from giving us such poverty—how He is to be hindered from making us so disastrously rich. In other words, when we have duly weighed this saying of Agur's, we may come to see that among all the pressing religious and spiritual problems of our day, this also must be entertained and solved—How to secure a more equable distribution of wealth, so that the extremes of wealth and poverty shall disappear, and all shall be fed with the food that is needful for them.

We are, after all, not mere driftwood. We cannot change the flow of the stream, it is true, but we can battle against it; and there are many matters in which we can effectually act in a spirit contrary to the spirit of the world. We can sometimes soften the rivalry which is the world's great principle. We can often act in co-operation and fellowship even in business matters. We can humanize our relations to our employees. If we have the misfortune to be very poor, we can guard ourselves from servility, we

can cultivate a free and independent spirit, and we can watch against bitterness and envy. If we have the still greater misfortune to be very rich, we can anxiously study how to give away our wealth without harming those to whom we give.

¶ The spirit of sacrifice is, we can see, the revelation of a larger life; and because it is so, it is also a revelation of victorious power. The life is one, and through its action soul can reach soul. We have all been able from time to time, in the most expressive phrase, to enter into the griefs, the wrongs, the failures, of others, and as we have done so, we have found within our reach a power of relief and restoration proportioned to our power of sympathy. If we may dare to use the phrase, there is a virtue which goes out from him who truly feels for another to the object of his love, not without effort, not without loss. We must feel that which we alleviate. There is a sense in which we must pay for all we give. The instinctive pleasure which is felt in natural gifts, in wealth and strength, and beauty and rank and intellect, is a call and a promise, a call to grateful use, and a promise of effective influence. But all these things are not in themselves blessings in which we can rest, but opportunities of blessing. They must be consecrated in service before they can be a true joy to their possessors; and everywhere there is the same condition of hallowing.[1]

4. Wise as Agur was, would he not have been wiser still if he had prayed, "Give me character, that whether thou sendest wealth or poverty, I may be strong and obedient and victorious"? The varying ranks, vocations, and properties of human life are all evident as moral tests. God is trying our hearts by wealth and poverty, by neither, and in some lives by both, by what He gives and what He withholds, in fact, by every temporal circumstance. And at the judgment day He will deal with us, not according to the measure of our substance, but according to the nature of our works. That is the thought which should be uppermost in our minds, and not, as is so often the case, only vain calculations of our gains and our losses, of what others have and what we have not. The question is, Are we using aright that which we have, and glorifying our God with the means He has entrusted to us? That is our first concern. And there is surely nothing which can so check the present-day unhealthy appetite for

[1] Bishop B. F. Westcott, *The Victory of the Cross*, 30.

wealth, which can so silence the fretful complainings of the poor, which can so well impress upon our hearts the wisdom of this prayer, and which can so conduce to make life practical, content, and holy as such honest self-inquiry as this.

¶ Sir Henry Taylor, in his *Notes on Life*, has a remarkable passage about money. "So many," he says, "are the bearings of money on the lives and characters of mankind, that an insight which should search out the life of a man in his pecuniary relations would penetrate into almost every cranny of his nature. He who knows, like St. Paul, both how to lack and how to abound has a great knowledge; for if we take account of all the virtues with which money is mixed up—honesty, justice, generosity, charity, frugality, forethought, self-sacrifice—and of their correlative vices, it is a knowledge which goes near to cover the length and breadth of humanity; and a right measure in getting, saving, spending, giving, taking, lending, borrowing, and bequeathing, would almost argue a perfect man."[1]

¶ "I revere," Emerson says, "the man who is riches"; "is" not "has." There is an ideal for you, the ideal of character, and, above all, that character which is formed after the pattern and by the grace of Jesus Christ. If Christianity had been dependent on circumstances, it would have died as soon as it was born. But because it reaches and touches the soul's true life, it lives and is still the renewing of the world and the hope of the future. The experience of the ages tells you that Jesus Christ can help you to be what is good and to do what is right. That is the essential; all else is subordinate. And whether you find yourself on the splendid heights of wealth or in the hard and narrow lot of poverty, to be what is good and to do what is right is the highest and the most lasting success. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Behold a wiser than Agur is here![2]

[1] E. H. Eland. [2] J. M. E. Ross.

# Eternity in the Heart.

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## Eternity in the Heart.

**He hath made everything beautiful in its time; also he hath set the world [eternity—R. V. marg.] in their heart, yet so that man cannot find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even to the end.—Eccles. iii. 11.**

1. This text, like the book of which it forms a part, has been a puzzle to interpreters. In the Authorized and Revised Versions it is translated "He hath set the world in their heart." But the word translated "world," which suggests the boundlessness of space, is elsewhere and generally used to denote the boundlessness of time. It is the word used in the phrase "for ever and ever." The best modern interpreters, therefore, translate it in this place by the word "eternity." So taken, the text is a nugget of pure gold, shining out from the dry sand and bare rock. The book which mourns over the vanity of earthly things, and sees so clearly the limitations of human knowledge, recognizes, notwithstanding, a Divine element in man. In spite of man's ignorance and weakness, God has put eternity in his heart.

2. By the word "heart" here, as elsewhere, we are to understand not man's affections alone, but his whole mental and moral being. The assertion is that all man's powers and processes, whether of reason or of will, involve and imply an eternal constituent, whether man is aware of it or not. And by "eternity" we are to understand not the endless prolongation of time, the everlasting continuance of successions, but rather superiority to time, elevation above successions. God Himself is not under the law of time—he is "King of the ages." And we are made in His image. Though we have a finite and temporal existence, we are not wholly creatures of time. To some extent we are above its laws. We have "thoughts that wander through eternity," a consciousness that we are too large for our dwelling.

place, a conviction that the past and the future are ours as well as the present.

3. The drift of the passage, then, appears to be something like this: God has made everything beautiful in accordance with its function and the relation in which it stands to other created things; it is beautiful as He sees it, whether it seems so to mortal eyes or not, for its beauty consists in the truth it expresses and the spiritual work it does; and, when the time comes for it to pass away, the effects of its work will still remain, for whatever God does is done for eternity. "Whatsoever God doeth it shall be for ever." Also God hath set the feeling of the eternal in the human heart; all men have it in some degree, even though they do not know why they should have it, cannot justify it to their reason, and cannot find out what God is doing by means of the things of time from beginning to end. Interpreted in this way, this great saying at once becomes luminous as well as profound, and the sage who originally uttered it might have been speaking for our day as well as his own in thus giving expression to his thought about the mystery of life. For three distinct things are emphasized here as present to human experience everywhere. The first is the sense of beauty; the second, mysteriously allied to the first, is the feeling of the eternal; and the third is our confession of perplexity and helplessness in the endeavour to find out what the purpose is, if any, which is being effected by means of the flux and travail of our earthly existence.

¶ Commenting on this passage Bacon says: "Solomon declares, not obscurely, that God hath framed the mind of man as a mirror or glass, capable of the image of the universal world, joyful to receive the impression thereof, as the eye joyeth to receive light." In his funeral sermon on Dr. Livingstone, Dean Stanley worked out a thought of a kindred kind. The earth, he said, is broken up by seas and mountains, so that the nations seem destined to live apart; but in man's breast there is a thirst for exploration and discovery, an unquenchable longing to know all that can be known of the world in which he lives; and as this desire takes shape in action, obstacles vanish, and all ends of the world are brought close together. The fact that the world is thus set in man's heart, so that he is prepared to explore it, to understand it, to use and to enjoy it, is surely a proof of design in Nature and of the wisdom and goodness of the great Creator.

## I.

### The Sense of Beauty.

**"He hath made everything beautiful in its time."**

Beauty is the most elusive and analysable thing that enters within the range of our perceptions. We have the idea of the beautiful, but we can never say just why any particular thing is to be pronounced beautiful, or wanting in beauty, as the case may be. Beauty is God's art, God's manner of working. Beauty is the necessary conception of the Creator's thought, the necessary product of His hand; variety in beauty is the necessary expression of His infinite mind. In created things there are, of course, necessary limitations; but the Creator seems to have impressed upon the things that He has made all the variety of which they are capable; no two faces, or forms, or voices, or flowers, or blades of grass are alike. Even decay and disorganization have an iridescence of their own. Beauty is not merely the surface adornment of creation, like paint upon a house, like pictures upon its walls, like jewellery upon a woman. Beauty permeates nature through and through; the microscope, the dissecting knife, reveal it; there is no hidden ugliness, no mere surface beauty, in God's works. If you try to eliminate their element of beauty, you destroy them. The core of the fruit is as beautiful as its rind. Beauty is an essential part of the nature of things. Equally with substance it inheres in everything that God has made. It is part of the perfection of God's works, part of the perfection of God Himself; like truth, like holiness, like beneficence, like graciousness.

¶ Why we receive pleasure from some forms and colours, and not from others, is no more to be asked or answered than why we like sugar and dislike wormwood. The utmost subtlety of investigations will only lead us to ultimate instincts and principles of human nature, for which no further reason can be given than the simple will of the Deity that we should be so created.[1]

¶ The nearest approach I can make myself to an explanation of what beauty is—and even that is no explanation, but only an index finger pointing towards it—is to say that it is the witness

[1] Ruskin, *Modern Painters.*

in the soul of that which is as opposed to that which seems—the real of which this world is but the shadow; it is a glimpse, an intimation of the Supernal, the state of being in which there is no lack, no discord, strife, or wrong, and where nothing is wanting to the ideal perfection, whatever it may be. In other words, it is the eternal truth reminding us of its presence, though unable with our limitations to do more than brush us with its wings. Keats hits the mark in his tender line:

> Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.[1]

1. The beauty of the world is something quite distinct from use; it is something superadded. It is like the chasing of a goblet which would be as useful if it had no beauty of form. Whatever may be said of the beauty of true utility it is unquestionable that the most intense of the emotions called out in presence of the beautiful have no connexion whatever with any thought of the fitness or unfitness of the objects thus perceived for any particular purpose, or of the correctness of the relation occupied by them to any larger category or to creation as a whole. When we feel the beauty of a tree, for instance, or a jutting crag, we are not influenced in the slightest by anything in their appearance which suggests that they are in their right place or that in form they obey the line of development which makes in some way towards a fuller expression of life and power.

¶ Ruskin has pointed out that the clouds could do all their work without their beauty. But they do not. They spread a perfect panorama of loveliness above us. Sometimes it is the feathery cirrus cloud, looking, as William Blake said, "as if the angels had gone to worship and had left their plumes lying there." Another time the cumulus cloud, with piled, heaving bosom, throbbing with anger, fills the heavens, soon to find relief in the lightning flash and the cracking thunder. Or it is the stratus clouds, placid and level, rising step behind step, looking so solid that imagination finds it easy to mount them and reach the land which is afar off, where is the King in His beauty.[2]

2. Beauty, however, is not without use. It is the messenger of God's love to the world, showing that all creation "means intensely and means good." It is the fringe of the Lord's own

[1] R. J. Campbell. [2] G. Eayres.

self, the outshining of His presence, the appeal of His love. Ruskin says that beauty is "written on the arched sky; it looks out from every star; it is among the hills and valleys of the earth, where the shrubless mountain-top pierces the thin atmosphere of eternal winter, or where the mighty forest fluctuates before the strong wind, with its dark waves of green foliage; it is spread out like a legible language upon the broad face of the unsleeping ocean; it is the poetry of nature; it is *that* which uplifts within us, until it is strong enough to overlook the shadows of our place of probation, which breaks link after link of the chain that binds us to materiality and which opens to our imagination a world of spiritual beauty and holiness."

¶ Wordsworth was convinced (and he gave his whole life to preaching the lesson) that to find joy in the sights and sounds of Nature actually fed a man's heart, and disposed him to the good life. In the well-known lines written on revisiting the banks of the Wye after an interval of five years, he expressed what he himself had owed to the sights seen on his former visit—

> Oft in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
> Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
> In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
> Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,
> And passing even into my purer mind,
> With tranquil restoration.

So far we should all agree: but he goes on—

> Feelings too
> Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
> As have no slight or trivial influence
> On that best portion of a good man's life,
> His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
> Of kindness and of love.

Wordsworth believed that happiness found among the things of Nature, the simple leap of the heart, for example, at the sight of a rainbow, transmuted itself into acts of kindness; and this need not surprise us, if we believe, as Wordsworth believed, that behind all the outward shapes of Nature lives and works the Spirit of God, who through these things sheds into our hearts His own gifts of joy and peace.[1]

[1] Canon Beeching, *The Grace of Episcopacy*, 134.

All earthly beauty hath one cause and proof,
To lead the pilgrim soul to beauty above:
Yet lieth the greater bliss so far aloof
That few there be are weaned from earthly love.
Joy's ladder it is, reaching from home to home,
The best of all the work that all was good:
Whereof 'twas writ the angels aye upclomb,
Down sped, and at the top the Lord God stood.[1]

3. Beauty has its seasons; it flushes and fades. Everything in the world must be in its true place and time, or it is not beautiful. That is true from the lowest to the highest; only with the lowest it is not easy to discover it. It does not seem to matter where the pebble lies, on this side of the road or on the other. It may indeed do sad mischief out of its place; but its place is a wide one. It may lie in many spots and do no harm, and seem to show all the beauty and render all the use of which it is capable. But the things of higher nature are more fastidious in their demands. The plant must have its proper soil to feed its roots upon, or its bright flowers lose their beauty, and even there, only in one short happy season of the year is it in its glory, while the pebble keeps its lustre always. Higher still comes the animal, and he has more needs that must be met, more arrangements that must be made, a more definite place in which he must be set, before he can do his best. And then, highest of all, comes man, and with his highest life comes the completest dependence upon circumstances. He is the least independent creature on the earth. The most beautiful in his right time and place, he is the most wretched and miserable out of it. He is the most liable of all the creatures to be thrown out of place. He must have all the furnishings of life, friendships, family, ambitions, cultures of every kind, or his best is not attained. It belongs then to the highest and most gifted lives to seek their places in the world. It is the prerogative of their superiority. Surely it would be good for men if they could learn this early. It would scatter many delusions. It would dissipate the folly of universal genius.

¶ The perfect woodwork of the carpenter, the strong ironwork of the smith, the carved marble of the sculptor, the August fields of the farmer, the cloth of the weaver, the school of the master,

[1] Robert Bridges.

the quiet room of the student, the college with its turrets, the cottage with its hollyhocks and vines, all come with their separate charm, and help to compose the magnificence of the world. In the thrilling page of history, the poverty of the learned is seen now to be as grand as the gold of the merchant or the estates of royalty. We do not feel that Socrates needed riches, and we are glad that Jesus Christ had nothing but a soul. The isolation of His soul made it stand forth like white figures upon a dark background. His soul reposes upon poverty like a rainbow upon a cloud.[1]

¶ I cannot feel it beautiful when I find men still at their business when they ought to be at home with their children. I cannot feel it beautiful to see the common work of the world going on on Sundays. I cannot feel it beautiful to see little children at hard work when they ought to be in school, or aged people still obliged to toil and moil to the very end. But good honest work, done with some pride and zest, and done in season, becomes in a way transfigured, and is "beautiful in its time."[2]

## II.

### The Capacity for the Infinite.

**"He hath set eternity in their heart."**

The doctrine of immortality does not seem to be stated in the Book of Ecclesiastes, except in one or two very doubtful expressions. And it is more in accordance with its whole tone to suppose the Preacher here to be asserting, not that the heart or spirit is immortal, but that, whether it is or not, in the heart is planted the *thought*, the *consciousness* of eternity—and the longing after it.

We differ from all around us in this perishable world in that God hath set eternity in our hearts. All creation around us is satisfied with its sustenance, *we* alone have a thirst and a hunger for which the circumstances of our life have no meat and drink. In the burning noonday of life's labour man sits—as the Son of Man once sat—by well-sides weary, and while other creatures can slake their thirst with that, he needs a living water; while other creatures go into cities to buy meat, he has need of and finds a sustenance that they know not of.

[1] D. Swing. [2] Brooke Herford, *Anchors of the Soul*, 251.

¶ It is said that Napoleon was asked to suggest the subject for a historical picture that would perpetuate his name, and he asked how long the picture would last. He was told that under favourable conditions it might last five hundred years. But that would not satisfy him; he craved for a more enduring memorial. It was suggested that the sculptor might take the place of the painter, and genius might come nearer to conferring immortality. Now what was the meaning of that ambitious craving? It was a perverted instinct; it was a solemn and impressive testimony to the fact that God has set eternity in man's heart. That demand for earthly immortality was but the echo—the hollow, mocking echo—of the voice of eternity in the great conqueror's soul.[1]

1. *God has set the eternal in the mind of man.*—It is the essential nature of thought to move out into the boundless, and to overleap all limitations of time and space. This seems to be precisely the meaning of the Preacher in the text. "Also he hath set eternity in their heart, yet so that man cannot find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even to the end." The eternal in the mind of man is a movement, not a fulfilment. He cannot comprehend the boundless, and yet he must for ever feel the dynamic of it. He is bound on an endless quest because he is, on the one hand, a finite creature, and because, on the other hand, God has set eternity in his heart.

¶ I had been attracted by Whewell's essay on "The Plurality of Worlds," where it is argued that our planet is probably the only world in existence that is occupied by intelligent and morally responsible persons; the stars of heaven being a material panorama existing only for the sake of the human inhabitants of one small globe. This paradox, we are to-day told, is fully fortified by "scientific proof" that the earth is mathematically placed in the centre of the limited portion of space which, according to the theorist, contains the whole material world. And all this is taken as an apology for the faith that a Divine incarnation has been realized upon this apparently insignificant planet, for the sake of persons otherwise unfit occasions of the stupendous transaction. But I do not see how science can put a limit to the space occupied by suns and their planetary systems, or how the universe can be proved to have any boundary, within a space whose circumference must be nowhere and its centre everywhere; or even a limit within time, in its unbeginning and unending

[1] A. Jenkinson, *A Modern Disciple*, 40.

duration. It seems a poor theistic conception to suppose God incapable of incarnation in man, unless this planet were thus unique in space and time. With the *infinite* fund of Omnipotent and Omniscient Goodness, what need to exaggerate the place of man, in order to justify *his* recognition, even according to the full economy of the Christian revelation ?[1]

2. *God has set eternity in the moral nature of man.*—This was what the philosopher Kant felt when he affirmed that the contemplation of the moral imperative filled him with awe, and with a sense of the sublime like that with which he looked upon the starry heavens. The moral law of which man is conscious, and by which he knows himself bound, belongs to the eternal order of things. In bestowing upon man the stupendous obligation of the moral consciousness, God has set eternity in his heart. Ill-success has attended the foolish attempt to deduce the majesties of the moral law from an accumulation of temporal experiences. A poor, little, broken code can be made out of the ingenious manipulation of man's interests and pleasures, and some lingering sentiments may be tortured out of forced theories of evolution. But the simple majesty of the moral imperative and the incomparable sublimity of moral truth bear a stamp which is known only in the heavenly places. The simple explanation is all-sufficing and manifestly true ; the Lord proclaimed His law from heaven.

Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
And the most ancient heavens, through thee, are fresh and strong.

¶ If you came across a piece of gold reef in the midst of a peat bog you could do no other than infer that it had been brought there by some ancient flood from some great system to which it truly belonged, or else that down beneath the blackness and ooze of the peat bog there lay a solid stratum wholly different in quality and worth. Or again, if, as is the case in some parts of the world, you saw a valley watered and made fertile by a stream that seemed to rise from the bowels of the earth, you would want to know where the reservoir was from which that stream got its volume. It is not otherwise with the heart of man. Right in the midst of the sombre ugliness of our common life lies the gold-

[1] A. Campbell Fraser, *Biographia Philosophica*, 259.

bearing rock which tells of a nobler origin for the soul, and of a stratum of being in which there is nothing of the blackness and the slime of evil. And in the valley of our cumulative experience, wherein so much that is gracious and beautiful springs and grows, watered by the flowing crystal river of spiritual ideals and aspirations that rises unceasingly from the mysterious deeps of our being, surely there is that which tells of our eternal home. It is in our heart because God has put it there, and because it is the fundamental fact, the most essential fact, of our strangely complex nature.[1]

¶ Tennyson has drawn a wonderful picture of a man of noble nature who has been led captive by lust. He knows the right and admires it. His soul has been filled with aspirations after it. But this one sin has crept slily in and made its home in his heart; it has fascinated and mastered him, so that he cannot shake it off. Sometimes his better nature rises up; he tries to break his chains —he fancies himself free; but the next time the temptation faces him he lays down his arms, and is willingly made captive. Though his passion is gratified he has no peace. The very nobility of that nature which is now degraded only makes his misery the greater. The fact that he knows the right so well, and yet, somehow, cannot be man enough to do it, makes his life at times intolerable.

Another sinning on such heights with one,
The flower of all the west and all the world,
Had been the sleeker for it; but in him
His mood was often like a fiend, and rose
And drove him into wastes and solitudes
For agony, who was yet a living soul.

. . . . . .

Yet the great knight in his mid-sickness made
Full many a holy vow and pure resolve.
These, as but born of sickness, could not live.

. . . . . .

"I needs must break
These bonds that so defame me; not without
She wills it. Would I, if she willed it? nay
Who knows? but if I would not, then may God
I pray Him, send a sudden Angel down
To seize me by the hair and bear me far,
And fling me deep in that forgotten mere,
Among the tumbled fragments of the hills."

[1] R. J. Campbell.

Such is man as we find him. He sits down in this poor, sinful world and, gathering everything he can reach around him, he tries to be content. But there is enough of God and eternity within him to confound him and make him miserable.[1]

3. *God has set eternity in the spiritual outreaching of man.*— Man is by nature a worshipping creature. He cannot help stretching forth his hands towards the heavens, and seeking communion with the everlasting invisible Power which is felt to dwell there. He cannot rest in temporal companionship and in the interests of time and place. His spirit summons him to unknown heights and bids him wistfully wait at the gates of eternal glory.

¶ When Shelley sought to dethrone and deny God, he was fain to set up in His stead an eternal Power which he called the Spirit of Nature. To this his spirit went pathetically out in earnest longing, and to this he rendered a homage indistinguishable from worship. God had set eternity in Shelley's heart, and he could not escape from the impulses of worship in his own spirit. The spirit of man, even when encompassed with much darkness of ignorance, must still stand

> Upon the world's great altar stairs
> That slope thro' darkness up to God.[2]

## III.

### The Tyranny of Circumstances.

**"He hath set eternity in their heart, yet so that man cannot find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even to the end."**

1. Here are two antagonistic facts. There are transient things, a vicissitude which moves within natural limits, temporary events which are beautiful in their season. But there is also the contrasted fact that the man who is thus tossed about, as by some great battledore wielded by giant powers in mockery, from one changing thing to another, has relations to something more lasting than the transient. He lives in a world of fleeting change, but he has eternity in his heart. So between him and his dwelling-

[1] W. Park. [2] J. Thomas, *The Mysteries of Grace*, 251.

place, between him and his occupation, there is a gulf of disproportion. He is subjected to these alternations, and yet bears within him a repressed but immortal consciousness that he belongs to another order of things, which knows no vicissitude and fears no decay. He possesses stifled and misinterpreted longings—which, however starved, do yet survive—after unchanging Being and Eternal Rest. And thus endowed, and by contrast thus situated, his soul is full of the "blank misgivings of a creature moving about in worlds not realized."

This creature with eternity in his heart, where is he set? What has he got to work upon? What has he to love and hold by, to trust to, and anchor his life on? A crowd of things, each well enough, but each having a *time*; and though they be beautiful in their time, yet fading and vanishing when it has elapsed. No multiplication of *times* will make *eternity*. And so, with that thought in his heart, man is driven out among objects perfectly insufficient to meet it.

¶ A great botanist made what he called "a floral clock" to mark the hours of the day by the opening and closing of flowers. It was a graceful and yet a pathetic thought. One after another they spread their petals, and their varying colours glow in the light. But one after another they wearily shut their cups, and the night falls, and the latest of them folds itself together and all are hidden away in the dark. So our joys and treasures—were they sufficient did they last—cannot last. After a summer's day comes a summer's night, and after a brief space of them comes winter, when all are killed and the leafless trees stand silent.

Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.[1]

2. We may be sure that this contrast between our nature and the world in which we are set is not in vain. We are better for having these cravings in our heart, which can never be satisfied here. Were we without them, we should sink to the level of creation. We sometimes say half sadly, half in jest, that we envy the peaceful contented lives of the lower animals. But we do not mean what we say. We would rather have our human life, with its hopes and fears, its pathetic yearnings, its storms and its calms, its immortal outlook, than a life without cares and without hopes

[1] A. Maclaren.

beyond those of the present moment. Picture some tropical forest, where animal and vegetable life luxuriates to the full, and where the swarms exuberant of life know no discontent. Would you give up your high though unsatisfied yearnings for bright but unreasoning life like theirs? Or when, in spring, you wander through the fields, burdened with cares and doubts and fears about the future, while the birds, in utter freedom from care, are filling the air with song, would you exchange with them, and part with your hopes of an endless life, your longings for the Father in heaven? Why, just to *ask* the question gives it its answer.

¶ When Alexander of Macedon, after he had subjugated the whole of the known world, shed tears that his conquests were over because there was nothing left for him to conquer, however much we may disapprove of the ambition to which he had surrendered his life, yet we admire him more than if he had sat down in selfish ease to enjoy himself for the rest of his days. The soul that aspires is nearer to God than the soul that is content and still. Or if we meet with one who cares for nothing higher than the worldly wealth and ease and pleasure he enjoys, would you change your noble discontent for his ignoble content with what "perishes in the using"? When we think of the future which lies before each one of us, we shall regard it as a crowning mercy and blessing, that, though at present God does not bestow the life we crave, He does give us longings for it, and refuses to let us forget it, since even in time "he has set eternity in our heart." It is this that keeps us from utter degradation; without it how base we should be.[1]

3. This universal presentiment itself goes far to establish the reality of the unseen order of things to which it is directed. The great planet that moves in the outmost circle of our system was discovered because that next it wavered in its course in a fashion which was inexplicable, unless some unknown mass was attracting it from across millions of miles of darkling space. And there are "perturbations" in our spirits which cannot be understood, unless from them we may divine that far-off and unseen world which has power from afar to sway in their orbits the little lives of mortal men. It draws us to itself—but, alas, the attraction may be resisted and thwarted. The dead mass of the planet bends to the drawing, but we can repel the constraint which the eternal

[1] *Memorials of R. T. Cunningham*, 96.

world would exercise upon us; and so that consciousness which ought to be our nobleness, as it is our prerogative, may become our shame, our misery and our sin.

This is the marvellous thing, that there is something in the heart of man constantly and successfully contradicting the sight of the eyes. For the eyes of man—and no one realized this more intensely than the Preacher—are weary with the sight of the things that fade and die. From the first time they look out upon the world, they behold the sad and continuous process of decay. All things are in flux, all things decay, nothing continues. Every voice speaks of mortality. Not only do leaves and flowers wither and fade, but a more educated eye beholds the stars fade in their orbits. The man that the eye beholds is a mortal creature passing swiftly from the cradle to the grave. For the eye of man mortality is signed and sealed in the dust of the tomb. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: surely the people is grass." What a tremendous witness to immortality must exist in the heart of man, to scorn the partial vision of the eye, and to transfigure its scenes of mortality into the light of immortal hope!

¶ "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord," said the author of the Book of Proverbs. Yes, a candle, but not necessarily one lighted; a candle, but one that can be kindled only by the touch of the Divine flame. To the natural man immortality is only a future of possibilities. To make it a future of realities we need to join ourselves to Jesus Christ. Take Christ, and eternity in the heart will not be an aching void, an unsatisfied longing, a consuming thirst. There is satisfaction here and now. He that believeth on the Son *hath* eternal life. Immortality is a present possession. The present is potentially the future. As Newman Smyth has said: "Just as the consciousness of the child contains in it the germ of his manhood, and just as gravitation on earth tells us what gravitation is among the constellations, so eternity in the heart here shows us what eternity will be hereafter."[1]

¶ In that delightful book *The House of Quiet* there is a striking passage where *The Life of Charles Darwin* is thus characterized: "What a wonderful book this is—it is from end to end nothing but a cry for the Nicene Creed. The man walks along, doing his duty so splendidly and nobly, with such single-heartedness and

[1] A. H. Strong, *Miscellanies*, i. 331.

simplicity, and just misses the way all the time; the gospel he wanted is just the other side of the wall."[1]

Two worlds are ours; 'tis only sin
Forbids us to descry
The mystic heaven and earth within,
Plain as the sea and sky.[2]

[1] David Smith, *Man's Need of God*, 9. [2] Keble.

Do it Well and Do it Now.

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## Do it Well and Do it Now.

**Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.—Eccles. ix. 10.**

### I.

### Do it.

**"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it."**

Action is the end of existence. We are living only whilst we are doing. We have not strayed into a fool's paradise where we may dream out our lives in inglorious idleness; but we have been sent into a vineyard where we have to dig the soil and sow the seed from which we are to reap an eternal harvest. No one of us is exempt from this responsibility. No man is born into the world whose work is not born with him. There is work for all, and tools to work with for those who will.

1. Work is the great condition of our physical and mental well-being. The world is accustomed to look upon it as a curse. But with Selkirk we are inclined to say—

> Blest work! if thou be curse of God,
> What must His blessings be?

Work was ordained before the Fall, and, this being so, it must be a necessity of life, for in those happy days there was no superfluity. The man who is for ever absorbing and never spending in work must either cease to live or live viciously. When Alexander conquered the Persians he said he learnt among other things that there was "nothing so servile as idleness, nothing so noble and princely as labour." Labour gives a wonderful satisfaction to man, and there are few forms of human satisfaction more enjoyable

than the completion of toil. Whatever be the form of our labour, the satisfaction produced by the completion of an allotted task is difficult to parallel. In itself, apart from its final results, work satisfies a great need of human nature, so that there are few men more thoroughly miserable than those who will not work. Life is worth living in any case, from its abundant interests, but life is tenfold more enjoyable when it is largely spent in strenuous labour.

¶ "Every good that is worth possessing," says Professor James, "must be paid for in strokes of daily effort." And so, as one of his practical maxims about life and habits, he offers this: "Keep the faculty of effort alive in you by a little gratuitous exercise every day."[1]

¶ He would have fully accepted the doctrine upon which Mr. Herbert Spencer has insisted, that it is a duty to be happy. Moreover, the way to be happy was to work. Work, I might almost say, was his religion. "Be strong and of a good courage," was the ultimate moral which he drew from doubts and difficulties. Everything round you may be in a hideous mess and jumble. That cannot be helped: take hold of your tools manfully; set to work upon the job that lies next to your hand, and so long as you are working well and vigorously, you will not be troubled with the vapours. Be content with being yourself, and leave the results to fate. Sometimes with his odd facility for turning outwards the ugliest side of his opinions, he would call this selfishness. It is a kind of selfishness which, if everyone practised it, would not be such a bad thing.[2]

2. What is true of the body and mind is no less true of the spirit. The care of the soul is the "one thing needful," and, if our souls be neglected, our hands are doing nothing as they ought. The wonder is that people do not see the necessity of work in religion. They will work for the world, but not for God; they will labour to enter in at the gate of success, but not at the gate of Heaven. They will toil hard in the world's vineyard, and stand idle in God's. They will lay up treasure for the body, and leave the soul to starve. They will rise early and so late take rest for the sake of a short life, and neglect eternity altogether.

[1] C. G. Montefiore, *Truth in Religion*, 138.

[2] Leslie Stephen, *The Life of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen*, 453.

¶ Mary Fletcher could not be content to walk with Christ in white and spend her widowhood in a life of contemplation and of hope. She could not be contented even in a life of Christian culture. Hers was an eminently practical and sympathetic nature. Her piety must find expression in loving ministries of deed and word. When tempted to desire release from toil and suffering, longing to depart and be with Christ, the words rang in her ears, "Would a Christian be in the meridian of glory? Would he have his robes shine bright? Let him stay here and do service." This fine old Puritan advice bore precious fruit in Mrs. Fletcher's later years. With unflagging zeal and constant assiduity, she devoted herself to the service of the people who, with her, had been so bitterly bereaved. "It is this part of her life and labours," says Mr. Macdonald, "by which she is chiefly remembered. There are, indeed, few pictures, in modern Christian history at least, more impressive than that in which she is the central figure, a saintly woman of great and varied gifts, in whom Quaker-like calmness and self-control were joined with Methodist fervour, for a whole generation a preacher of the gospel and a witness for Christ among the people of Madeley and the neighbourhood."[1]

3. This is the world of service. This is the world of probation and of preparation for eternity. We are here upon business. And what is our business? We are to do whatsoever "our hand findeth"—whatsoever is the duty allotted to us daily by Him whose we are. Opportunity must direct and quicken our duty. That is to be done which our hand findeth to do, that which occasion calls for. Every moment brings its own responsibilities. We are all members of one vast body; and the Lord has set us, as so many different agents, in that body, as it hath pleased Him.

¶ As you grow older you will find more and more how full the world and our life are of opportunity, and how impossible it is that, unless by our own fault, they should seem to present a blank. The real discouragement of life is in our insufficiency for the duties that crowd in on every side, and are still crying out, as it were, that they remain undone. But the consoling and powerful remedy is that nothing is asked of us beyond our power, and that, if more is offered than we can do, it is by way of gracious help to exercise our energies, and so to raise them to the best and highest state of which they are capable.[2]

[1] T. A. Seed, *John and Mary Fletcher*, 108.

[2] *Letters on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone*, ii. 164.

## II.

### With thy Might.

**"Do it with thy might."**

1. "Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well," is a homely proverb of the *practical* man. The most successful workers in the world are ever the most earnest. Search the history of those men of name immortal who have spoken so eloquently to mankind through their paintings, tuned the soul to melody by their music, and fired its latent energies with their poetry—men who have shone as suns in their day and generation, whose peerless minds have enabled them to soar to heights as far above their grovelling fellows as those in which the majestic eagle sweeps and circles above the distant earth. They were all men who worked with their might. Despite the fact that some people are more highly gifted with brain and skill than others, still in most cases the difference between first-rate and second-rate work is due (at least to a large extent) to the greater pains and time bestowed upon the first-class work.

¶ One of Mrs. Gaskell's favourite texts was: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, that do with all thy might." "Just try for a day to think of all the odd jobs, as to be done well and truly in God's sight—not just slurred over anyhow—and you'll go through them twice as cheerfully, and have no thought to spare for sighing or crying," was her practical way of explaining this text.[1]

¶ My father's mental characteristics, if I may venture on such ground, were clearness and vigour, intensity, fervour, concentration, penetration, and perseverance. This earnestness of nature pervaded all his exercises. A man of great capacity and culture, with a head like Benjamin Franklin's, an avowed unbeliever in Christianity, came every Sunday afternoon, for many years, to hear him. I remember his look well, as if interested, but not impressed. He was often asked by his friends why he went when he didn't believe one word of what he heard. "Neither I do, but I like to hear and to see a man earnest once a week about anything." It is related of David Hume, that having heard my great-grandfather preach, he said, "That's the man for me, he

[1] Mrs. E. H. Chadwick, *Mrs. Gaskell: Haunts, Homes, and Stories*, 172.

means what he says; he speaks as if Jesus Christ was at his elbow."[1]

2. So highly do we reckon the excellence of strength and effort that there is a sense in which, by way of paradox, we assert that from the strenuous sinner there is more to be hoped for than from the flabby and feeble man of virtue, as if all the glorious potentialities of human nature were directly associated with and conditioned by effort and eagerness and strength. If we do not force ourselves to remember that a man may be zealous in evil as well as in good, we should be inclined off-hand to allow that strenuousness was one of the most obvious, as well as one of the most essential, of human virtues. Whether the good angel is strenuous may be argued; that the good man is strenuous admits of no doubt. It is a fact of experience that slackness almost changes virtue into vice, while strenuousness almost changes vice into virtue.

¶ The Hon. Charles Howard, M.P. for East Cumberland, says of him: "It always seemed to me that Mr. Moore was the most thorough man I knew in all that he undertook; and whatever was the object, whether it was business, fox-hunting, canvassing at elections, acts of charity, or services of devotion, his heart was always in his work. He was never satisfied until he had accomplished all that he had proposed to do. I have no doubt that this quality of earnest perseverance and shrewdness of character accounted for George Moore's success in life; but they would not have gained for him the love and affection that all felt for him, were it not for his warm heart and his genial nature."[2]

3. Again, the words of the text might be taken as a motto for the *Christian* life. We do not want to be like the man whose son was asked whether his father was a Christian. "Yes," said he, "he is a Christian, but he hasn't been doing much at it lately." Christian service demands the strenuous and constant application of hand, head, and heart. The people who throw themselves thus into their labours belong to the class termed enthusiasts; but we may be reminded, for our encouragement, of Emerson's remark that "every step in the progress of the past has been a triumph

[1] Dr. John Brown, *Horæ Subsecivæ*, ii. 60.
[2] S. Smiles, *George Moore, Merchant and Philanthropist*, 505.

of enthusiasm." It is one of the secrets for bringing heaven near us, for feeling the Infinite with us and within us, to be whole-hearted in the present task. Thinkers have often noted this strange fact: that great enthusiasms tend to become religious. Let a man be mastered by any great idea, and sooner or later he will find the shadow of God on it. But that is true not of great enthusiasms alone; it holds of whole-heartedness in every sphere. When Luther said, "*Laborare est orare*"—"to labour is to pray"—you may be sure that that great soul did not mean that work could ever take the place of prayer. He knew too well the value of devotion, and the blessed uplifting of the quiet hour with God, ever to think that toil could take its place. But just as in earnest prayer the heavens are opened to us, and we are led into the presence and glory of the King, so in our earnest and whole-hearted toil, clouds scatter, the mists of feelings and passions are dispelled, and we are led into a peace and strength and sweet detachment without which no man shall see the Lord. It is in that sense that to labour is to pray. To be whole-hearted is to be facing heavenward. And the great loss of all half-hearted men and women is this, that above the dust and the stress and strain of life, above the fret and weariness of things, they catch no glimpse of the eternal purpose, nor of the love, nor of the joy of God.

¶ Olive Schreiner, in one of her weird "Dreams," tells the parable of an artist who painted a beautiful picture. On it there was a wonderful glow which won the admiration of all compeers, but which none could imitate. The other painters said, "Where does he get his colours from?" They sought rare and rich pigments in far-off Eastern lands, but when these touched the canvas their richness died. So the secret of the great artist remained undiscovered. But one day they found him dead beside his picture, and when they came to strip him for his shroud they found a wound beneath his heart. It dawned upon them then that he had painted his picture with his heart's blood. If you would do your task of teaching the children, of helping the helpless, feeding the hungry—if you would have this work to live—then put your heart into it. Paint your picture with your heart's blood, for only such will find a place in heaven's Eternal Gallery. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it *with thy might*."[1]

[1] G. H. Morgan, *Modern Knights-Errant*, 190.

¶ During the Crimean War, Stanley [who was then Canon of Canterbury] was walking in Hyde Park with Thomas Carlyle, who, in bitter mood, was railing against the institutions of the country. In answer to his twice-repeated question, "What is the advice which you would give to a Canon of Canterbury?" came a reply that began in jest and ended in earnest: "Dearly beloved Roger," said Carlyle, "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." And with all his might he strove to find and to do the right work. He knew that his gifts lay in other directions than that of business details. His special work consisted in using to the utmost his powers and opportunities as a preacher; in arousing his fellow-citizens to a keen appreciation of their privilege of living beneath the shadow of a great historic building; in guarding, restoring, and preserving the monuments of the illustrious dead who lay buried within its precincts; in imparting to its cold stones the living warmth of human interests; in transforming its bare walls into glowing pages of national history. It was in these directions that he strove to realize to himself the thought which he so often expressed, that "Every position in life, great or small, can be made almost as great, or as little, as we desire to make it."[1]

## III.

### Is this the End?

**"For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest."**

The writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes—that wonderful book, which depicts to us the history of a soul groping in at least half darkness, without any clear light of God—speaks as one who knows only the present world and the present life, to whom beyond the grave all is dark, blank, lifeless. To him the business of every day is simply what our hands "find to do"—he asks not how—by chance, or choice, or overruling law.

1. The reason he gives for his present counsel is a double-edged one. If this short life be all that we know or can be sure to grasp, it may be, indeed, reasonably contended that we must make the most of it for ourselves and for others, throw all our

[1] R. E. Prothero, *The Life and Correspondence of Arthur Penrhyn Stanley*, i. 430.

energies into it, content if our work remains for good, when we ourselves are gone. But it may also (in a more ignoble spirit) be urged that a life so short and precarious is hardly worth living, and that we had better take it as easily as we may, and "eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." All the irreligious philosophies of the present day, as of the past, draw one or other of these two inferences. Each has plausible reasons to give for itself in those discussions of the two voices of which modern thought is full. But the deep, practical instinct of common sense and right feeling will always grasp the nobler alternative, the one suggested in the text.

¶ The consciousness of living under a Divine authority and providence leads us to regard our life as a vocation, a call from God. We can no longer regard our abilities, our opportunities, our circumstances, as fortuitously concurrent, accidental things. Taken in their combination they indicate God's will for us; they point out the particular work that God would have us to do. Our faculties and opportunities are gifts from God, to be used in His service, and for whose right use we are responsible, and must one day give account. No relative insignificance of the gift will be accepted as an excuse for its misuse. We are as accountable for one talent as for ten; for the use of the eleventh hour, as much as for the burden and heat of the day.[1]

2. The motive set forth by the Old Testament thinker was frequently urged with great solemnity by our Lord Himself; "No work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." This is a fact well fitted to take hold of us; and, rightly grasped, so far from paralysing energy, it stimulates work. Death puts an end to all plans and work, and death for every one is inevitable. From none, indeed, it standeth very far off. We see that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others. The wind passeth over them, and they are gone. Their place knows them no more. They were full of schemes and projects, hopes and fears, envies and rivalries—and they are gone. They have broken every tie. The silver cord has been loosed. They are no longer seen in the assembly of the congregation, in the concourse of the people. Their place at home is vacant, and the world, like the "grim

[1] J. R. Illingworth, *Divine Transcendence*, 205.

reaper" who never sits down to rest, holds on its way. We see it. We know it. We are sure that this will happen to ourselves. We stand as if upon precipitous ground, slipping away. And this brief, uncertain life is all the time we have to sow the good seeds of eternity. It was upon this that the Jewish writer fixed his mind. It seemed to him but reasonable that, in the presence of death, which in other passages he pictures as so uncertain in its advent, men should cease trifling with time. It was this truth of natural religion that made him hopeful that they would be persuaded to put their whole strength into what they did, realizing that they might never have the chance to do it again in this life, and that after death there was neither work nor device. And surely with this solemn thought do the years speak as they roll on to eternity; and he into whose heart their voice enters, and who does not silence it, he it is who will be found giving to worthy work his best strength and his unconquerable patience.

¶ Life to the pessimist is but a series of pains to be experienced. To the giddy, thoughtless pleasure-seeker it is so much or so little opportunity for the gratification of selfish desires. To some it is more than this. It is a series of opportunities for doing good, and we must make haste to use them all, because our time will soon be up, and we must away to see whether we have carried out God's programme. Remember this; think upon it; not with morbid feelings of fear, but because the time is so short, let us live while we live. Let us work while it is yet day, for when the day has completed its course, work unaccomplished must remain undone.[1]

[1] G. H. Morgan, *Modern Knights-Errant*, 191.

# Giving and Receiving.

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## Giving and Receiving.

**Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.—Eccles. xi. 1.**

1. There is considerable difference of opinion as to the sense of this verse of Ecclesiastes. The old interpretation which found in it a reference to the practice in Egypt of sowing seed during the inundation of the Nile is not admissible. The verb *shalach* is not used in the sense of sowing or scattering seed; it means "to cast or send forth." But there are two other explanations of the passage for which much can be said.

(1) The view which Delitzsch has taken is a modification of that formerly held by Martin Geier, J. D. Michaelis and others—namely, that Koheleth recommends the practice of the prudent merchant, who sends for his merchandise in ships, which go over the face of the waters to distant lands, with the expectation that on their return he will receive his own with an increase. This view is supposed to be confirmed by the statement concerning the good woman in Prov. xxxi. 14, "She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar," and the words of Ps. cvii. 23, "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters." But one sees no reason why Koheleth should suddenly turn to commerce and the trade of a maritime city. Such considerations have no reference to the context or to the general design of the book. Nothing leads to them, nothing comes of them.

(2) The favourite explanation is that the verse inculcates a liberal charity—"Give your bread to any who chance to need it, and you will at some distant time receive a reward." If we take it so, we have a maxim in due accordance with the spirit of the rest of the work, and one which conduces to the conclusion reached at the end. The bread in the East is made in the form of thin cakes, which would float for a time if thrown into a

stream; and, if it be objected that no one would be guilty of such an irrational action as flinging bread into the water, it may be answered that this is just the point aimed at. Do your kindnesses, exert yourself, in the most unlikely quarters, thinking not of gratitude or return, but only of duty. And yet surely a recompense will be made in some form or other.

2. The earliest comment on the passage is that of Ben Sira, who, in a maxim of his, extant only in Chaldee, observes, "Strew thy bread upon the surface of the water and on the dry land, and thou shalt find it in the end of days." It will be observed in this earliest comment upon the verse that the difficulty of considering the verb to refer to sowing of seed was felt even at that time, and an attempt made to obviate it by translating the word in a sense in which it certainly occurs. Bishop Lowth in his work on *Hebrew Poetry* has explained the phrase as equivalent to the Greek expression "to sow the sea." But the aphorism of Koheleth was not meant as an exhortation to engage in labour though apparently fruitless. Its signification is better conveyed in the Arabic proverb quoted from Diez by several commentators, "Do good, cast thy bread into the water, at some time a recompense will be made thee." Delitzsch observes that the same proverb has been naturalized in Turkish, "Do good, throw it into the water; if the fish does not know it, God does."

¶ A very suitable parallel is quoted by Herzfeld from Goethe's *Westöstlicher Divan*,

> Was willst du untersuchen,
> Wohin die Milde fliesst!
> Ins Wasser wirf deine Kuchen:
> Wer weiss, wer sie geniesst!

A similar interpretation is found in Voltaire. Dukes gives in his note the following story, quoted from the Kabus by Diez (*Denkwürdigkeiten von Asien*, 1 Th. p. 106 ff.), which, whether it be a fact or a fiction, well illustrates the meaning of the Arabic proverb: "The caliph Mutewekkil in Bagdad had an adopted son Fettich, of whom he was very fond. As the latter was bathing one day, he sank under the water and disappeared. The caliph offered a large reward to any one who should recover the boy's body. A bather was fortunate enough after seven days to discover the boy alive in a cavern in a precipitous mountain by which

the river flowed. On investigation, the caliph ascertained that the boy was kept from starving by cakes of bread borne to him over the surface of the water, on which cakes was stamped the name of Mohammed ben Hassan. The caliph, having summoned Mohammed ben Hassan into his presence, asked him what induced him to throw the bread into the water. Mohammed ben Hassan replied that he had done so every day for a whole year in order to test the truth of the Arabic proverb already cited. The caliph, according to the story, was so pleased with his conduct that he made over to him on the spot five villages in the neighbourhood of Bagdad.[1]

3. The whole passage in which the text occurs seems to be a protest against that despondency and over-anxiety which are so apt to lower our generosity, and to relax our faithfulness to duty. Beneficence ought to look forward hopefully into the future; but it ought not to be over-calculating. Beneficence without hope loses one of the springs of its energy. Beneficence without thought may cease to be beneficence in anything but the motive, and may positively injure where it desires to bless. But thoughtfulness in well-doing is one thing; anxious calculation is another thing. Such calculation is apt to rob us of hope, and to depress our energy. It is likely also to defeat its own ends. For there are limits to our powers of thought. We cannot with certainty forecast the future, or foretell the results even of our own actions. The ways of God are, many of them, mysterious. It is ours to sow; the harvest is with Him. No doubt we ought to sow as wisely as we can; but we ought also to remember that, with all our wisdom, the harvest may be different from what we anticipate. If we begin to calculate too much, we shall calculate badly. Let us therefore do good "as we have opportunity," dealing with present claims rather than with future contingencies, acting with hopeful yet unselfish generosity, and with diligent and thoughtful yet unanxious beneficence. This seems to be the central lesson of the passage before us.

¶ Give not only unto seven, but also unto eight, that is, unto more than many. Though to give unto every one that asketh may seem severe advice, yet give thou also before asking; that is, where want is silently clamorous, and men's necessities not their

[1] C. H. H. Wright.

tongues do loudly call for thy mercies. For though sometimes necessitousness be dumb, or misery speak not out, yet true charity is sagacious, and will find out hints for beneficence. Acquaint thyself with the physiognomy of want, and let the dead colours and first lines of necessity suffice to tell thee there is an object for thy bounty. Spare not where thou canst not easily be prodigal and fear not to be undone by mercy; for since he who hath pity on the poor lendeth unto the Almighty rewarder, who observes no ides [when borrowed money was repaid] but every day for his payments, charity becomes pious usury, Christian liberality the most thriving industry; and what we adventure in a cockboat may return in a carrack unto us. He who thus casts his bread upon the water shall surely find it again; for though it falleth to the bottom, it sinks but like the axe of the prophet, to rise again unto him.[1]

## I.

### The Precept.

**"Cast thy bread upon the waters."**

There can be little doubt that this admonition applies to the deeds of compassion and beneficence which are the proper fruits of true religion. In times of famine, in cases of affliction and sudden calamity, it is a duty to supply the need of the poor and hungry. Almsgiving is the natural, the necessary, expression of a healthy Christian character. The Christian cannot but be communicative of the goods which he has. Almsgiving is not a concession to importunity, by which we free ourselves from unwelcome petitioners; it is not a sacrifice to public opinion, by which we satisfy the claims popularly made upon our place or fortune; it is not an appeal for praise; it is not a self-complacent show of generosity; it is not, in a word, due to any external motive. It is the spontaneous outcome of life.

But there are many other ways in which benevolence may express itself besides almsgiving. The Christian is called upon to care both for the bodies and for the souls of his fellow-men—to give the bread of knowledge as well as the bread that perisheth, and to provide a spiritual portion for the enrichment and consolation of the destitute.

[1] Sir Thomas Browne, *Christian Morals*, 90.

1. *The Bread of Kindness.*—Cast seed on the soil, and you may reasonably expect a harvest. But to "cast bread upon the waters"—what good can come of that? And yet there are many acts of beneficence which seem quite as unlikely ever to bring any return to the benefactor. We are to be kind to others, even although we can see no ground for hoping that we shall ever be recompensed by them. There are many cases in which simply the need of others ought to be our chief motive in well-doing. It is indeed quite true that mere indiscriminate almsgiving is likely to do harm instead of good. But here, we shall suppose, is a case in which we know a man to be in real need, and we are able really and truly to help him. We are not sure that he will be even grateful to us. We cannot well conceive of our ever coming into circumstances in which we shall need his help. Well, let us "cast our bread upon the waters." Let us be generous without calculation. Let us do good to the man without any considerations of personal advantage. Let not our benevolence take the form of a mere "investment." However unprofitable to ourselves our well-doing may appear to be, still let us continue to do well.

¶ It surely cannot matter to you whom the thing helps, so long as you are content that it won't, or can't, help *you*? But are you content so? For that is the essential condition of the whole business—I will not speak of it in terms of money—are you content to give work? Will you build a bit of wall, suppose—to serve your neighbour, expecting no good of the wall yourself? If so, you must be satisfied to build the wall for the man who wants it built; you must not be resolved first to be sure that he is the best man in the village. Help any one, anyhow you can: so, in order, the greatest possible number will be helped; nay, in the end, perhaps you may get some shelter from the wind under your charitable wall yourself; but do not expect it, nor lean on any promise that you shall find your bread again, once cast away; I can only say that of what I have chosen to cast fairly on the waters myself, I have never yet, after any number of days, found a crumb. Keep what you want; cast what you can,—and expect nothing back, once lost, or once given.[1]

(1) Charity, in the sense of the gospel, is disinterested. The design, in every act which is entitled to this name, is to do real good to those who are its objects. The intention of the author of

[1] Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 19 (*Works*, xxvii. 323).

it will invariably be to promote the happiness or to relieve the distresses of the sufferer; not to advance his own reputation, to promote his own selfish purposes, or even to prevent the reproaches of his own conscience. In a word, selfishness, of whatever kind, and in whatever form it may exist, is not charity.

¶ Lady Blanche Balfour was a person whose thoughts were not like other people's thoughts, and who could do things which other people could not do. The Cotton Famine in Lancashire during the American Civil War stirred her sympathy greatly. As it happened at the time that her establishment was being reduced, —probably with a view to her going abroad with her children,— she used the opportunity to make a novel proposal to them. They were told that, if they liked to do the work of the house, any money that was saved in this way would go to the help of the distressed people. When they agreed to take this up, the house was divided. The few servants remaining had the use of the still-room at one end of it to prepare their own meals in, and the kitchen was made over to Lady Blanche's daughters, who, after the two eldest had a few lessons from the cook before she left, did the family cooking, with only the assistance, for the roughest work, of two quite untrained Lancashire girls, who were brought from amid the "idle sorrow" of the time in Manchester to stay in Whittingehame House. Lady Blanche's sons [of whom the Right Hon. A. J. Balfour is the eldest] had also work of the house which they could do allotted them, such as cleaning of boots and knives. Of course the young ladies were new to cutting up and cooking meat; so the meals at first were very irregularly achieved, and were trying enough even to youthful appetites. They must have been still more trying to Lady Blanche herself, who was really an invalid always. But more than one purpose of hers was served. The help sent to Lancashire was greater by the amount saved in household expenses; her children had the sense of giving this share of help through their own labour and self-denial; and they had besides a discipline of great value, as no doubt their mother intended, in the thorough knowledge acquired of details of house-keeping, and in the check given to dependence on comforts. Others, perhaps, in her circumstances might have imagined and planned such a procedure as this; but few could have carried it through.[1]

(2) Bountifulness should distinguish beneficence. The crumbs which fall from the rich man's table, the scraps which are doled out at the servant's door, are not to be here accounted of. "The

[1] J. Robertson, *Lady Blanche Balfour*, 25.

liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand." "Cast thy bread." Let it not be extorted from you. Let it be given "heartily," "not by constraint, but willingly." The "cheerful giver" is the acceptable giver. "Freely ye have received, freely give." Even when our own "daily bread" is scanty, we are to cast some of it upon the waters whenever there is a Divine call to do this. A poor widow, who had been reduced to penury, acted thus one day at Zarephath, a town in the region of Tyre and Sidon. She shared with the prophet Elijah what she thought might possibly be her last meal, and she took him home with her as a guest "for many days." The reward of her hospitality, after perhaps nearly two years, was the restoration to life of her dead son in answer to the prophet's earnest prayer.

¶ Miss Pipe's whole attitude to beneficence of action and expenditure was characteristic. She believed in practical benefit rather than in charity commonly so called. Her gifts in money were numerous and generous, but she took great pains to learn how the money would be used, and often, when some individual or society was doing what seemed to her valuable work, she would send to either an unexpected cheque in assistance of what she approved. The work was just as often scientific, pedagogic, or artistic, as conventionally charitable, and sometimes took the form of help in publication in order to preserve the author's aim from interference; of help in establishing schools, when she approved of those who ventured; of money sent for travelling when the need was educational. These and similar gifts did not interfere with a constant liberality to missions, church-schemes and expenses, to hospitals, work amongst the poor, and especially to such work as Miss Octavia Hill was doing, in which she warmly welcomed the high intelligence, the educative processes, the seeds sown for the future. To her own personal friends she was always and continuously generous, delighting to find out what they needed or wished, and to supply it. Some memoranda of her personal expenditure have escaped destruction, and indicate the splendid proportion of her giving to others compared with her purchasing for herself. For instance, in one year she gave away £288, and spent £14 on dress; in another, while dress cost £90, giving reached £363; in a third, dress amounted to £58 and giving to £406; in a fourth, dress had grown more costly, reaching £100, but giving had increased to £485; and by 1880, dress had sunk to £71, while giving had grown to £789.[1]

[1] *Life and Letters of Hannah E. Pipe*, 194.

2. *The Bread of the Gospel.*—Though liberality and kindness are the primary lessons of our text, it may well suggest, as in our ordinary conversation it does suggest, every kind of work for God. There is in the world an ever-increasing amount of work done in the spirit of Christian benevolence, efforts on behalf of the young, the outcast, the victims of drink, the criminal, the poor, the afflicted; efforts that at times seem to be fruitless, and often meet with lack of appreciation, often with ingratitude, and at times even with wrath. Those for whom we may have done our best take a base advantage of kindness, or say to us, like the evil spirit of old, "Let us alone," and, after all our efforts, are not any the better, but rather the worse. We are inclined to lose heart and hope because we see no fruit of our labours. It is to those in such a condition, who are depressed and think it not worth while to continue, that such words as the text may apply. Our bread is to be cast upon the waters. We are to render service—service that often costs much—to thankless people. We must be content to work when our work is unacknowledged, unrequited—even when it is despised. If we serve men in material things, indifference and ingratitude may be the return; but this is still more likely to be the case when we seek to do them the highest good. People appreciate gold, bread, or raiment sooner than they appreciate efforts to raise their mind and character. Much of the highest, painfullest service wrought for the good of men—work of brain and heart—is least appreciated. So many a sincere worker is sad because of the lack of appreciation, and ready to renounce his self-sacrificing work, seeing it is so disregarded.

But let us remember how God's work and gifts are unappreciated. The multitude crowds into the music-hall and gazes with rapture on some vulgar stage scenery painted in glaring ochres, whilst God's bright landscapes full of perfect beauty solicit their eye in vain. There is a great crush in the public gardens to witness an exhibition of fire-works—small tricks in saltpetre; but the eager crowd turns its back on the moon walking in brightness and God's heaven sown with stars. And men treat God's government and grace as they do His handiwork, ignoring Him who is wonderful in counsel, excellent in working. Yet for all this He does not suspend His beneficent action; He continues His glorious

and generous administration, whatever may be the response of His creatures. He makes His sun to shine upon the evil and the good, His rain to descend upon the just and the unjust, despite the thanklessness of the far greater portion of those who are so richly and undeservedly blessed. How largely the sublime work of the Lord Jesus is unrecognized! "Where are the nine?" is a mournful question still on our Master's lips. But He does not fail, neither is He discouraged because of the blindness and heartlessness of those whom He suffered to redeem; He pursues the thankless with offers of grace and blessing. We are far too anxious about acknowledgments and congratulations. It is natural, perhaps, that we should suffer some sense of disappointment, but have we not considerations and motives to lift us far above such discontent? It is rather the gratitude than the apathy of men that should leave us mourning. Let us work in the spirit of a noble faith and consecration, knowing that what we give and suffer will be lightly esteemed among men.

¶ It was a saying of Cromwell's that "he goes farthest who knows not where he is going." He did not forecast his actions and see far ahead, did not, indeed, try to do so. To him the important thing was to get what he regarded as a leading from the Lord. When he was sure of that, all hesitation on his part was gone. It is not business-like to know not whither you are going, and he is not likely to go far who should enter upon business in that fashion. But in the spiritual realm it is different. The great thing there is to follow the Divine leading, and to sow even though it be in tears, trusting Him who gives the command that all will be well, and that in His own good time there shall come a reaping time of joy.[1]

## II.

### The Promise.

**"Thou shalt find it after many days."**

This comes in most seasonably on the back of such a precept, and its expressiveness is not instructive merely; it is most encouraging; nothing could be better; it is in every way most worthy of the heartiest consideration and acceptation.

[1] J. S. Maver.

1. The most uncalculating generosity is precisely that which is most certain, in one way or other, to meet with its reward. "Thou shalt find it after many days." This is not to be the motive of our acts, but it will in the course of time be the result.

¶ 21st September 1863—Met at the house of the Rev. C. K. Paul, at Stourminster Marshall, Father Strickland, an English Jesuit, who said to me—"I have observed, throughout life, that a man may do an immense deal of good, if he does not care who gets the credit for it."[1]

¶ If we give because we do not know how soon we may need a gift, and in order that we may by-and-by "find the good of it," do not even the heathen and the publicans the same? Well, not many of them, I think. I have not observed that it is their habit to cast their bread on thankless waters. If they forebode calamity and loss, they provide against them, not by giving, but by hoarding; and even they themselves would hardly accept as a model of charity a man who buttoned up his pocket against every appeal, lest he should be yielding to a selfish motive, or be suspected of it. The refined selfishness of showing kindness and doing good even to the evil and the unthankful because we hope to find the good of it is by no means too common yet; we need not go in dread of it. Nor is it an altogether unworthy motive. St. Paul urges us to help a fallen brother on the express ground that we may need similar help some day (Gal. vi. 1); and *he* was not in the habit of appealing to base motives. Nay, the very Golden Rule itself, which all men admire even if they do not walk by it, touches this spring of action; for among other meanings it surely has this, that we are to do to others as we would that they should do to us, in the hope that they will do to us as we have done to them. There are other higher meanings in the Rule of course, as there are other and purer motives for Charity; but I do not know that we are any of us of so lofty a virtue that we need fear to show kindness in order to win kindness, or to give help that we may get help when we need it. Possibly, to act on this motive may be the best and nearest way of rising to such higher motives as we can reach.[2]

2. Some may happily find an almost immediate return, like the mother of Moses when she entrusted her babe to the Nile

[1] Sir M. E. Grant Duff, *Notes from a Diary, 1851–1872*, 111.

[2] Samuel Cox, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, 250.

waters, and her faith was rewarded even beyond her expectations. Others may be like Jonathan, whose unselfish love towards David found a return after he was gone, in David's kindness to his son, Mephibosheth. And to others the fulness of the return may be still more remote, as when Ruth cast in her lot with Naomi, and thereby came to be privileged to have in the line of her descent the Saviour of the world.

¶ There is a certain beauty and power in the life that is lived and the labours that are wrought with a distant aim in view. There is no such thing as labour for remote ends in the brute creation, but in man you find it, and nothing distinguishes man from man more than the capacity to foresee and work toward a far-distant result. As Ruskin says, "It is the far-sight, the quiet and confident patience that, above all other attributes, separate man from man, and near him to his Maker, and there is no action nor art whose majesty we may not measure by this test."[1]

¶ I know a man intimately who has been periodically solicited for loans of money during a long term of years, and who has generally acceded to the request. Of these loans he can recall only one instance of repayment; but the instance is that of a boy whom he relieved in an emergency, and who has lived to be a comfort to his family. The one success has compensated the many failures. The bread which has been cast upon the waters has come back only in fragments; but the fragments have been so precious that they have justified the cost.[2]

3. However long in coming, the reward will come. "Thou *shalt* find it after many days." Our work shall not be unavailing, our bark shall not be shipwrecked. To do any work with ardour, thoroughness, and perseverance we must have a strong assurance that it will succeed, and in the noblest work we have that assurance. The seed that was sown generations ago is bearing fruit to-day, and it shall be so once more with the seed we sow. The ship that we sent forth with trembling, that is never reported from any foreign port, that is never spoken by a passing sail, that sends no message in sealed bottle on the waves, that is frozen fast in abysses of frost and darkness, shall nevertheless return, bringing treasure beyond all ivory, pearls, or gold. On celestial cliffs we shall hail argosies that we fitted out and sent

[1] J. S. Maver. [2] G. Matheson, *Thoughts for Life's Journey*, 232.

over stormy seas. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; . . . they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

¶ Dr. Dwight of America tells how, when the country near Albany was newly settled, an Indian came to the inn at Lichfield, and asked for a night's shelter—at the same time confessing that from failure in hunting he had nothing to pay. The hostess drove him away with reproachful epithets, and as the Indian was retiring sorrowfully—there being no other inn for many a weary mile—a man who was sitting by directed the hostess to supply his wants and promised to pay her. As soon as his supper was ended, the Indian thanked his benefactor, and said he would some day repay him. Several years thereafter the settler was taken a prisoner by a hostile tribe, and carried off to Canada. His life was spared, however, though he himself was detained in slavery. But one day an Indian came to him, and giving him a musket, bade the captive follow him. The Indian never told where they were going, or what was his object; but day after day the captive followed his mysterious guide, till one afternoon they came suddenly on a beautiful expanse of cultivated fields, with many houses rising amongst them. "Do you know that place?" asked the Indian. "Ah, yes—it is Lichfield"; and whilst the astonished exile had not recovered his surprise and amazement, the Indian exclaimed, "And I am the starving Indian on whom at this very place you took pity. And now that I have paid for my supper, I pray you go home."[1]

There is no labour lost
Though it seem tossed
Into the deepest sea.
In dark and dreary nights,
'Mid stormy flash of lights,
It cometh back to thee.
Cometh not as it went,
So strangely warped and bent,
But straight as an arrow new.
And though thou dost not know
How right from wrong may grow,
From false the true—
Thou must confess ere long
Sorrow hath broke forth in song—
That life comes out of death,
The lily and rose's breath

[1] J. Hamilton, *The Royal Preacher*, 198.

From beds where ugly stains
Were washed below by earthly rains.
Fear not to labour, then,
Nor say, "I threw my time away!"
It is for God, not men,
To count the cost and pay.

# After that the Judgment

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## After that the Judgment.

**Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgement.—Eccles. xi. 9.**

The greater part of the Book of Ecclesiastes is of a sombre character. It records the experiences of one who sought on all sides and with passionate eagerness for that which would satisfy the higher wants of his nature—the hunger and thirst of the soul—but who sought in vain. Ordinary coarse, sensual pleasures soon lost their charm for him; for he deliberately tried—a dangerous experiment—to see if in self-indulgence any real satisfaction could be found. From this failure he turned to a more promising quarter. He sought in "culture," the pursuit of beauty and magnificence in art, the pathway to the highest good, on the discovery of which his soul was set. He used his great wealth to procure all that could minister to a refined taste. He built palaces, planted vineyards and gardens and orchards; he filled his palaces with all that was beautiful and costly, and cultivated every pleasure that is within the reach of man. "Whatsoever mine eyes desired," he says, "I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy. . . . Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on all the labour that I had laboured to do: and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." From this he turned to the joys and employments of an intellectual life—acquired knowledge and wisdom, studied the works of nature, analyzed human character in all its phases, and applied himself to the study of all those great problems connected with the moral government of the world and the destiny of the soul of man. Here he was baffled. The discoveries he made were, he found, useless for curing any of the evils of life, and at every point he

met with mysteries which he could not solve, and his sense of failure and defeat convinced him that though "wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness," it does not satisfy the soul.

What, then, is the result of his inquiries, of his pain and labour in searching after the highest good? Do his speculations leave anything untouched which may reasonably be the object of our pursuit, and which may afford us the satisfaction for which he sought in vain in so many quarters? Does he decide that life is, after all, worth living, or is his conclusion that it is not? In the closing sections of his book some answer is given to these questions; something positive comes as a pleasing relief from all the negations with which he had shut up one after another of the paths by which men had sought and still seek to attain to lasting happiness. Two conclusions might have been drawn from the experience through which he had passed. "Since the employments and enjoyments of life are insufficient to give satisfaction to the soul's craving, why engage in them, why not turn away from them in contempt, and fix the thoughts solely on a life to come?" an ascetic might ask. "Since life is so transitory, pleasure so fleeting, why not seize upon every pleasure, and banish every care as far as possible?" an epicurean might ask—"Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die." Neither of these courses finds any favour in the mature judgment of the writer who draws his teaching from the experience of the Jewish king. "Rejoice," he says, rebuking the ascetic; "know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgement," he adds, for the confusion of the epicurean. He speaks with the authority of one who had fully considered the problems of life, and with the solemnity of one whose earthly career was hastening to its close; and he addresses himself to the young, as more likely to profit by his experience than those over whom habits of life and thought have more power. The counsel which the Preacher has to give is bold and startling. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgement."

¶ The writer appears to have come under the influence of Greek philosophy. An accomplished scholar has been able to

point out some remarkable coincidences between the sayings of Heraclitus and the sayings of Ecclesiastes. There are, moreover, passages in the book which furnish striking parallels to the Epicurean philosophy as it is interpreted by Lucretius. It is not surprising that thinkers, pondering the mysteries of the universe and the strangely complicated drama of human life, should have fallen into the same vein, should have been struck by the same problems, and have given utterance to similar thoughts respecting them. The melancholy, the questioning, the scepticism, which are found in Ecclesiastes, have been found in the Eastern mystics, and in poets so far removed from Ecclesiastes and from one another as Shakespeare and Tennyson. Thoughts like these are not the product of one age, or one country, or one philosophical school. They are the common heritage of all deeply moved hearts and minds. Still it must be admitted that the Jewish mind was not naturally reflective, it was averse from speculation, and it is at least not improbable that the thought of this Jewish preacher may have been coloured by Greek philosophy.[1]

## I.

### The Joy of Youth.

**"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth."**

God does not grudge us joy. God's own life is a life of joy. Although His life is a life of calm, unruffled joy, yet it is a life of joy none the less. It is not the calm of stagnation; it is not the calm of a life in which there is nothing to move it. It is more like the calm of that great tide of which Tennyson speaks, "too full for sound and foam." It is the calm of an intense joy, so great, so unbroken, that it is always still. And God who has Himself this fulness of joy desires to see that joy shared by His creatures. That was the very reason why He made them, and He made them with that capacity for joy and that desire for joy, and He set all round about them in this wonderful world the things that might help them to be joyful.

¶ Dante and Virgil, as they traverse the gloomy circles of the Inferno, come upon a stagnant and putrid fen, and there, buried in the black mud, they see the souls of the gloomy-sluggish,

[1] J. J. S. Perowne.

who in expiation of their sinful gloom in life, are ever forced to mutter—

> We were sad
> In the sweet air made gladsome by the sun,
> Now in this miry darkness are we sad.

To be sad in the sunshine was a crime in the great poet's eyes, and the poets and prophets of Scripture were herein at one with him. For the Psalmist says, "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous"; and Isaiah, "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness"; and St. Paul, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice."[1]

1. To be young is itself a privilege and a joy. The blessing of youth is joy: the blessing of mature life is work: the blessing of old age is peace. The young are all for enjoyment; the middle-aged all for achievement; the aged all for rest. It is the highest wisdom of young people to retain their youthfulness of heart and life as long as possible. It is no reproach to be young; it is one of those priceless privileges which are all the more precious because we can none of us be young for long, and we can never be young more than once. Half the miseries of youth come from the undue haste of those who wish to leave it behind them—so missing the vigour of their manhood, and the peace of their old age.

¶ Pitt, who was Prime Minister of England when twenty-four, was once taunted by an old man with his extreme youth. "The atrocious crime of being a young man," he said, "I shall not attempt to palliate or deny, but content myself with wishing that I may be one of those whose follies may cease with their youth, and not of that number who are ignorant in spite of experience." Therefore, let all rejoice in their youth, who have their life before them; let them not rob youth of its chief charm by despising it, and hurrying out of it before their time.[2]

2. A peculiar joy belongs to youth, because of the novelty and vividness of early sensations, feelings and perceptions. It is indeed one of the features of youth that we are able to find pleasure in so many things, whereas older people are able to find pleasure in fewer things. This is at once our glory, and our peril. Every sensibility and faculty of our nature is richly stored with

[1] F. W. Farrar, *In the Days of Thy Youth*, 92. [2] E. Griffith-Jones.

vital force, and with the power to realize life vividly and fully. The process of growing old usually involves the gradual loss of this freshness. But there are some people who do not seem to grow old in this way; they retain to the end the faculty of realizing the freshness of life; happy are they. And we shall find that those who do retain this power longest are just those who, when they were young, were careful with their pleasures as with their health; feeding their mind on the simplicities of life; taking care not to pall their appetites with too prodigal a feast; entering into the enjoyment of pleasure with a self-contained heart; and, above all, thinking not so much of enjoyment as of something higher and better, which brought enjoyment in its train unsought—as a gift thrown in to those worthy to receive it.

¶ "Live as long as you may," said Southey, "the first twenty years are the longest half of your life, and they are by far the most pregnant in consequences." It was Robert Burns who sighed:

O man! while in thy early years,
How prodigal of time!
Mis-spending all the precious hours,
Thy glorious youthful prime!

3. Another source of joy in youth is found in its idealism. Every healthy-minded youth is an idealist. This power of the ideal runs through the whole of life. It is found in the friendships of youth, giving them a warmth and an unselfishness that we do not often see in older people—unless in the case of friendships that date from boyhood and girlhood, which are among the richest possessions of life; for "blessed are they who can boast of old friends." It is to be seen in the ambitions of youth, surrounding the objects of desire like a halo. And it is the most beautiful element in the religion of young people, that it fills them with innumerable ideals, and makes the unseen, the immaterial, and the Divine glow with a reality of beauty and a pulse of power which are at the root of almost everything worth talking of in the history of mankind. On every side human life sinks to the level of mechanism when it ceases to establish and declare the ideals by which it lives. It is not so much the embodiment of the ideal and the actual attainment of the end as it is the assertion of the ideal, the positing of the goal—"the

will to believe," as Professor James puts it so forcefully; it is this that constitutes the power of idealization.

> What I aspired to be,
> And was not, comforts me:
> A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

¶ Isaac D'Israeli said, "Almost everything great has been done by youth." "The first open look of young eyes on the condition of the world is one of the principal regenerative forces of humanity." One never knows what may come of a young man's thoughts and fancies and ideals. This idealizing faculty is also one of the richest sources of joy, whether it comes to play in love, friendship, work, or religion. And it is peculiarly a youthful joy. Therefore, said the Preacher, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth."[1]

4. The sage recommends the young man to rejoice in his youth, because the opportunity will soon pass away. We are not listening to a Christian moralist, nevertheless the sentiment is Christian. "Childhood and youth are vanity"; that is to say, they are transient, fleeting. "Therefore," say a certain class of religionists, "extinguish their natural instincts as summarily as possible. They are transient, therefore they are of no account. They are 'vanity,' therefore to enjoy them is dangerous, if it be not sinful." But the logic of the Preacher takes a different line. Childhood and youth, or youth and manhood, are fleeting; therefore "Banish sorrow from thy mind, and put away sadness from thy body." He evidently does not think the brevity and transitoriness of a thing is a reason for despising it.

¶ The rose which you pluck in the morning withers before the next morning, but you delight yourself with its colour and perfume none the less while it lasts. A summer morning, with its dewy freshness, is a thing of only an hour or two; but you do not, for that reason, shut yourself up in your chamber, and refuse to breathe the morning scents, and to look upon the sparkle of the dewdrops. Youth and fresh manhood are things of only a few years; but their brevity is, to the Preacher, the reason why they should be enjoyed. Those have done infinite damage who have set on foot the notion that youth, from the moment it turns to religion, surrenders all pleasure, lightness of heart, and robust enjoyment; and such teachers have been betrayed into this

[1] E. Griffith-Jones.

terrible and fatal mistake through their failure to see that God's training is not to stunt or to crush out human nature, but to develop and elevate it.[1]

¶ It seems to me that the Gospel of the Transfiguration should be more widely proclaimed among us. The poets sing of it, the mystics show it, even the scientific men have some foreshadowings; but in the common ways of men it is unheard. "God is Joy itself." Where is the man who shall preach with power to the multitude of the transfiguring of pleasure into joy, as well as of the like transfiguring of pain? "Joy, then," says Myers, "I will boldly affirm, is the aim of the Universe; that Joy which is the very bloom of Love and Wisdom; and men's souls need attuning to that inconceivable delight."[2]

¶ What in Aurelius was a passing expression, was in [the Christian] Cornelius (Marius could but note the contrast) nature, and a veritable physiognomy. It was, in fact, we may say, nothing less than the joy which Dante apprehended in the blessed spirits of the perfect; the outward expression of which, like a physical light upon human faces, from the land which is very far off, we may trace from Giotto, and even earlier, to its consummation in the purer and better work of Raffaelle—the serenity, the durable cheerfulness, the blitheness of those who had been indeed delivered from death, of which the utmost degree of that famed Greek blitheness or *Heiterkeit* is but a transitory gleam, as in careless and wholly superficial youth.[3]

## II.

### The Sobering Sense of Responsibility.

**"But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgement."**

The second part of the text is not meant to destroy or neutralize the concession of the first sentence, but only to purify and ennoble a gladness which, without it, would be apt to be stained by many a corruption, and to make permanent a joy which, without it, would be sure to die down into the miserable, peevish, and feeble old age of which the grim picture follows, and to be quenched at last in death.

[1] M. R. Vincent, *God and Bread*, 191.
[2] *A Modern Mystic's Way.*
[3] Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean.*

1. God intends us to live for something better than pleasure. Pleasure as relaxation is right enough, but when we make it our chief business it becomes sin. A butterfly life of vain frivolity and amusement is to prostitute the purpose of our living. God has sent us into the living world to cultivate our spiritual nature by His service. We are created for God, and we answer the end of our being only when we consecrate our lives to His glory. Anything short of making God the supreme object of our reverence and affection is to miss the great end of life. We may indulge in no sinful pleasure, and in no pleasure that is in any degree questionable: but if we make pleasure our god, the thing for which we live, then it is sin. This is to disobey the first command of the law, "Thou shalt have none other gods before me."

¶ There is always the temptation of youth to think that, because things are lawful one cannot have too much of them. Charles Lamb tells us, in one of his delightful essays, of certain people who set a house on fire in order that they might enjoy the rapture of eating roast sucking-pig. That is very much like the action of those who burn up every grave and sober thing in the fire of pleasure and sport. Laughter is a pleasant thing, but a perpetual cackle and grin is the sure mark of an idiot. Enjoyment is a gift of God, but to sacrifice and forget everything else for it is to prostitute God's gift to the service of the devil.[1]

2. A man's mature years are a sort of judgment on the enjoyments and work of his earlier days. If his pleasures have been impure, shameful, and wrong; if he has been habitually guilty of excess in the indulgence of appetites, in drink, smoking, or anything akin to that; it all follows him into the real work of life, and unfits him for it. He goes forth into the world with a corrupted and diseased imagination, perhaps with a weakened body, and certainly with a debilitated mind. And if his early life has been of the frivolous, sportive, self-indulgent kind, if he has not hardened himself a little in severer things, by laying up a preparation of knowledge, by getting acquainted with the best thoughts of men, he is handicapped in all the race of life.

¶ Perhaps there is no commoner delusion than that we may give our youth to vanity and rejoice with thoughtlessness and yet catch up the duties of life at some onward point more vigorously

[1] J. G. Greenhough.

than if we had not known youthful madness and folly. All such imaginations are broken against the great retributive law which runs throughout life and pervades every phase of it. If we give the rein to our pleasure-loving tendencies, and walk in the ways of our heart, unmindful of higher things, the "lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," will take hold of us till we not only do not think of higher things, but do not care to think of them, or even despise them as dreams of an impracticable Puritanism. There will grow from self-indulgence, deadness of heart; and from the love of pleasure, atheism of desire, till the very beauty of the natural life is worn away, and we fall into a selfishness which is capable neither of satisfaction nor of hope.[1]

¶ In his essay on Burns, Carlyle refers to that period in the poet's life when, as a mere youth, he leaves the paternal roof and "goes forth into looser, louder, more exciting society; and becomes initiated in those dissipations, those vices which," says Carlyle, "a certain class of philosophers have asserted to be a natural preparative for entering on active life; a kind of mud-bath, in which the youth is, as it were, necessitated to steep, and, we suppose, cleanse himself, before the real toga of Manhood can be laid on him. We shall not dispute much," he continues, "with this class of philosophers; we hope they are mistaken: for Sin and Remorse so easily beset us at all stages of life, and are always such indifferent company, that it seems hard we should, at any stage, be forced and fated not only to meet but to yield to them, and even serve for a time in their leprous armada. We hope it is not so. Clear we are, at all events, it cannot be the training one receives in this Devil's service, but only our determining to desert from it, that fits us for true manly Action."

3. This judgment may carry approval and reward no less than penalty. Whenever this book may have been written, we find in it numerous allusions to a state of society which give these words about a future judgment a peculiar meaning and force; for the book depicts a society under a capricious despotism, with all its corruptions and miseries. The wealthy revel in palaces, vineyards, and pleasure-grounds; kings are childish, and princes given to revelry and drunkenness; fools are uplifted, and noble men degraded; riches are not for the intelligent, or favour for the learned; to become rich is to multiply extortions; life stands at the caprice of power; sensuality runs riot. In short, the whole

[1] Principal Tulloch, *Some Facts of Religion and of Life*, 243.

political fabric was falling into disrepair and decay, the rain leaking through the rotting roof; while the miserable people were ground down with ruinous exactions, in order that the rulers might revel on undisturbed. And as the book reveals this fearful social condition, so, likewise, it gives expression to the temper which grows up in men's minds after a long course of such oppressions—a kind of fatalism and hopelessness which tempts one to yield passively to the current of affairs, to believe that God has ceased to rule, and that order and right have vanished from the world, to snatch at every pleasure, to drown care in sensuality rather than try to maintain an integrity which is sure to be rewarded with personal and social ruin. That kind of temper, if it once gains headway, will affect all classes and ages. In the nobler and better-seasoned characters, it becomes a proud despair; in vulgar minds, a bestial greed, and an untramelled selfishness; in youth, a prompter to unbounded sensuality.

We can see, therefore, what a powerful antidote to this temper would be furnished by the truth of a righteous judgment. Once lodge firmly the truth that men are moving on through all the hard and bitter and unjust conditions of their time to a supreme tribunal, and you have made it impossible to believe that the world is lawless. A final judgment implies a law; and a law implies a lawgiver, and an authority to administer and vindicate the law. Thus the truth carries with it both comfort and obligation. There is a Divine order in the world; we are not finally at the mercy of chance or of men's caprice: the order will vindicate itself in time, and with itself will vindicate those who hold by it. So long as there is judgment, wrong is not eternal, and retribution is a fact. Therefore, it is better to do right, notwithstanding the "oppressor's wrong and the proud man's contumely." One can afford to be cheerful, even amid oppressions and troubles like these, if the time is short and a day is coming in which wrong shall be righted and worth acknowledged and fidelity rewarded.

¶ A great German thinker has it, in reference to the history of nations, that the history of the world is the judgment of the world; and although that is not true if it is a denial of a day of final judgment, it is true in a very profound and solemn sense with regard to the daily life of every man, that, whether there

be a judgment-seat beyond the grave or not, and whether this Preacher knew anything about that or not, there is going on through the whole of a man's life, and evolving itself, this solemn conviction that we are to pass away from this present life. All our days are knit together as one whole. Yesterday is the parent of to-day, and to-day is the parent of all the to-morrows. The meaning and the deepest consequence of man's life is that no feeling, no thought that flits across the mirror of his life and heart dies utterly, leaving nothing behind it. But rather the metaphor of the Apostle is the true one, "That which thou sowest that shalt thou also reap."[1]

4. The teaching of this Old Testament sage needs to be supplemented by later revelation. He has made us indeed realize the essential soundness of life. He has given us a clear vision of its dignity and worth. He has made us feel that life is to be received with joy, and pursued with enthusiasm and courageous zeal. He has led us to the conviction that God's approval is upon His own work, and upon the zest and joy with which men undertake that work. But he lacked what the men of the Old World lacked before the keels of Columbus's caravels grazed the shore of the New—viz., knowledge that the New World is here. He lacked what men lacked whose sky was a firmament and whose stars brightly studded that solid dome; he lacked the sense of the open sky, the myriad vastness of the world of stars, the sense of a universe fulfilling itself in an eternity of years. Had this lack and limitation been absent, it is more than likely that he would not have written his closing chapter with the melancholy description of the breaking-down of life. He might have written instead in the spirit of Rabbi Ben Ezra:

> Grow old along with me!
> The best is yet to be,
> The last of life, for which the first was made:
> Our times are in His hand
> Who saith "A whole I planned,
> Youth shows but half; trust God: see all nor be afraid!"

¶ As Jean Paul says: "We desire virtue, not as the reward of virtue, but as its continuance. Virtue can no more be rewarded than joy can; it is its own reward." And so sings Tennyson,

[1] A. Maclaren.

turning the vision of the great German to music in one of hi own deathless lyrics:

Glory of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,
Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on an endless sea—
Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong—
Nay, but she aim'd not at glory, no lover of glory she:
Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.

The wages of sin is death: if the wages of Virtue be dust,
Would she have heart to endure for the life of the worn and the fly?
She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky:
Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.

# Timely Remembrance.

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## Timely Remembrance:

**Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth, or ever the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.—Eccles. xii. 1.**

All the books, both of the New Testament and of the Old, may be said to have been written in faith and by faith. But we might use different words to describe the faith of the different saints and prophets who wrote them, or whose deeds are told there; if we should say that Moses had a self-sacrificing faith, Isaiah an expectant faith, Jeremiah a sustaining faith, Daniel a consoling faith, we might express some special truth as to the writings and spirit of each, as well as the true faith in God which is common to all. And if we thus distinguish the kinds of faith wherein the books of Scripture are written, we might say that this Book of the Preacher was written with a daringly honest faith, a faith that would look facts in the face, and see God in or behind those very things which serve to hide Him from most others.

Ecclesiastes is never afraid to declare his belief that life is good and pleasant—parts, at least, of this life very pleasant indeed, and meant to be enjoyed. "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun"; "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes."

But he knew all the time that faith must be strengthened by all truth; that every single truth agrees with every other, while "no lie is of the truth," and no lie can serve the truth. The world *is* good—good because God made it; but for us to live for this world only is not good, because this world will pass away, and we shall not, but shall have to be judged. He therefore speaks the words of the text in which he appeals to those who have life before them to remember God whatever else they forget.

¶ "There is a polish for everything that taketh away rust; and the polish for the heart is the remembrance of God." The companions said, "Is not fighting with the infidels also like this?" Lord Muhammad said, "No, although he fight until his sword be broken!"[1]

¶ On a chalk hill in England there is a gigantic figure of a horse cut out on the green turf, allowing the white soil to be seen. This was an idol that was worshipped by our heathen ancestors. It was the white horse of Odin that was held in the deepest reverence all over the North of Europe. Provision was made for keeping the shape of this figure clear and distinct on the hill for all time coming. At stated intervals a grand ceremony took place, attended with much pomp, called "the Scouring of the White Horse," which consisted in removing the weeds and grasses that had choked and obscured the white lines of the gigantic idol cut out on the hill-side.[2]

1. "*Remember.*"—The word "remember" in the text is a word full of meaning. It tells us that we have not to do something new, but to keep in mind something that we have already known. We have not by searching to find out a God unknown to us, but to recall a God in whose image we were created, by whose grace we were redeemed, and for whose glory we were made. His likeness was at first stamped upon us, as truly as the portrait of the king is stamped upon the coin we use, and on the postage stamp we put upon our letter. In the most sinful and polluted nature traces of this Divine image can be detected. And what is wanted is that this Divine image in us, which sin has soiled and defaced, which the evil things of the world have grown over and hidden, shall be restored.

¶ On 28th July, 1900, Westcott again addressed the Durham miners at their service in the Cathedral. In opening his address the Bishop said: "A great modern writer has said, 'If I looked into a mirror, and did not see my face, I should have the sort of feeling which actually comes upon me when I look into this living busy world and see no reflexion of its Creator.' It is a startling and terrible image. I know no more impressive one in literature, and have we not all felt something of the same kind? We look upon the life of men whom God has made in His own image, and expect to find everywhere tenderness, self-control, self-sacrifice,

[1] *The Sayings of Muhammad* (trans. by Al-Suhrawardy), 115.
[2] Hugh Macmillan, *The Daisies of Nazareth*, 70.

love in its thousand shapes; instead of this we are met on all sides by selfishness, self-indulgence, passion, carelessness of all things except the desire of the moment. As Cardinal Newman says, it is as if we looked into a mirror and did not see our face. If, indeed, what we see upon the surface were all, I do not think that life could be lived. But, thank God, it is not all. When a sudden crisis comes, commonplace men, men hitherto in no way distinguished from their fellows, prove themselves heroes. They hear in their own souls the voice of God, and without one thought lay down their lives to save their comrades. Your own work, your own experience, is fertile in acts of unlooked-for and unprepared self-devotion. Such deeds correct our first impressions. They show us the true man; and we rejoice. God has not left the world which He called into being, though He hide Himself, and if the eyes of our hearts are open we can see Him. We rejoice in the signs of a Divine nature."[1]

2. The remembrance of God should inspire youth with a sense of its responsibility and opportunity. The French have a saying, "If youth but knew and age had power." It is almost a proverb, so deep and full of wisdom is its sad truth. If youth but knew that youth is their spring! If youth but knew that they are shaping the future! If youth but knew that it has opportunities that will never come again! Memory is in a peculiar sense the faculty of youth; and it is a wise contrivance of Him who formed us, that on our setting out in life we should be furnished with the means of laying in those stores of knowledge which we shall have to draw upon in future years. Youth is the time to make those impressions upon the mind, and to paint those scenes upon the imagination, which the eye of the soul will survey in after life, when it contemplates the objects and images which surround it in the world within.

¶ I love above all other reading the early letters of men of genius. In that struggling, hoping, confident time the world has not slipped in with its odious consciousness, its vulgar claim of confidantship, between them and their inspiration. In reading these letters I can recall my former self, full of an aspiration which had not learned how hard the hills of life are to climb, but thought rather to alight down upon them from its winged vantage-ground. Whose fulfilment has ever come nigh the glorious greatness of his yet never-balked youth? As we grow older, art becomes

[1] *Life and Letters of Brooke Foss Westcott*, ii. 293.

to us a definite faculty, instead of a boundless sense of power. Then we felt the wings burst from our shoulders; they were a gift and a triumph, and a bare flutter from twig to twig seemed aquiline to us; but now our vans, though broader grown and stronger, are matters of every day. We may reach our Promised Land; but it is far behind us in the Wilderness, in the early time of struggle, that we have our Sinais and our personal talk with God in the bush.[1]

(1) *It is in youth that we have the power to remember our Creator.*—Our knowledge of God afterwards is ever tending to be of a different kind—a knowledge without love—in which our reason seems to go beyond our feelings, which does not interweave itself in our nature, and is certainly not, to the same degree, capable of moulding us to His will. In a few years we shall no more be able to make a free offering of our hearts to Him. We shall bring Him the waste of our power, the wreck of our lives. The world will have caught us in its toils; those natural gifts which seem in themselves not far from the Kingdom of Heaven will have passed away and been lost to us; the goods of this life will place themselves between us and heaven. If we ever looked upwards with any earnest thought or wish, if we ever remember to have felt assured in past times of a blessedness on those who believed, let us hold fast this thought, let us recall this image, because the time of promise is short and the evil days will soon come.

¶ The period of gloom began with Newman's enforced resignation of the editorship of the *Rambler* in 1859 and lasted till Kingsley's attack on him in 1864. It was undoubtedly aggravated by a touch of morbidness brought on by ill-health. His state of mind in those years is recorded in a journal which he began to keep at this time—one of the literary treasures he has left—written as in the sight of God, with an utter simplicity and sincerity. The first entry [dated Dec. 15th, 1859] was written shortly after his failure as editor of the *Rambler*. "I know perfectly well, and thankfully confess to Thee, O my God, that Thy wonderful grace turned me right round when I was more like a devil than a wicked boy, at the age of fifteen, and gave me what by Thy continual aids I never lost. Thou didst change my heart, and in part my whole mental complexion at that time, and I never should have had the thought of such prayers as those which

[1] *Letters of James Russell Lowell*, i. 154.

I have been speaking of above but for that great work of Thine in my boyhood. Still those prayers were immediately prompted, as I think, in great measure by natural rashness, generosity, cheerfulness, sanguine temperament, and unselfishness, though not, I trust, without Thy grace. I trust they were good and pleasing to Thee, —but I much doubt if I, my present self, just as I am, were set down in those past years, 1820 or 1822 or 1829, if they could be brought back, whether I now should make those good prayers and bold resolves, unless, that is, I had some *vast* and *extraordinary* grant of grace from Thy Heavenly treasure-house. And that, I repeat, because I think, as death comes on, his cold breath is felt on soul as on body, and that, viewed naturally, my soul is half dead now, whereas then it was in the freshness and fervour of youth. And this may be the ground of the grave warning of the inspired writer, 'Memento Creatoris tui in diebus juventutis tuae, antequam veniat tempus afflictionis . . . antequam tenebrescat sol,'" etc.[1]

(2) *It is in youth that we can offer a generous devotion of self.*— It is easy to see how dishonourable it is to offer to God the blind and lame and sick instead of the healthy and vigorous part of our lives; yet we may feel it the more if we compare that which we sacrifice to God with what God sacrificed for us. What He gave up indeed, in coming down from heaven, we cannot possibly measure or understand; but look at His life after He was made Man, and there learn what is a true generous devotion of the best of self. Look at Him who was born in a stable on a winter night, that there might be no moment kept back from the work He had to do, that He might begin to suffer from the first; who worked unknown and unhonoured for thirty years, a poor man's Son and a poor Man Himself, that He might know all the petty worrying cares of everyday life, as well as the great sufferings that it is noble and heroic to endure. He had very little time to take His pleasure in. The evil days came on Him very soon—days in which He had no pleasure, but in which His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; when the sun and the light was darkened, not in the heaven only, but in His soul, as He cried, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Indeed, He gives us more time to be happy in than He had Himself. Is His perfect life, His early death, a thing to be repaid with the shortest, latest, poorest days that we count that enough to offer Him?

[1] W. Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, i. 574.

¶ The outline of the life of Jesus Christ, in all its human essentials, is that of a failure as complete as can be conceived; and yet the historic figure we know and think of stands out in all human essentials as a Conqueror. And, re-examining that life, in the light of its own standard, we shall see One who so truly overcame, both in Himself and in His influence, that nothing seems to yield such copious hint of the solution of life's mystery as does His "failure." His failure stands not in a loss of spirituality, but in the superabundance and intensity of it. The isolation of His Spirit did not result in a diminution of the ideal, any more than did disappointment sour, or poverty embitter, Him. The bare outline of His life is harsh and forbidding; it is that of a failure: but upon near approach, it is found to be lit by an inner light, and in the light of that personal life we see a form of wondrous beauty and commanding awe. In a word, the *personality* of Jesus Christ is as sublime a triumph as His *life* is supreme among failures.[1]

(3) *If we remember the Creator in our youth, He will remember us in our old age.*—It cannot be truly said by an aged Christian, "I have no pleasure"; and though there may be "clouds," he has also long and sunny intervals, and beyond this cloudy region he has blessed prospects. The peace which the Saviour gives to His people is a well of water springing up unto everlasting life; and there is nothing that keeps the feelings so fresh and youthful as a perennial piety. Compare that young sceptic, who has half persuaded himself into the disbelief of God and hereafter, and whose forced unbelief is often interrupted by intrusions of unwelcome conviction,—compare him with "Paul the aged" in prison, writing, "I know whom I have believed. I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."

¶ The biographies of two veterans appeared so simultaneously as almost to compel the contrast. Their declining days were somewhat similar. When getting old and feeling frail, they lost some of their dearest friends, and each lost his fortune. In these circumstances Sir Walter Scott writes, "The recollection of youth, health, and uninterrupted powers of activity, neither improved nor enjoyed, is a poor strain of comfort. . . . Death has closed

[1] T. J. Hardy, *The Gospel of Pain.*

the long dark avenue upon loves and friendships; and I look at them as through the grated door of a burial-place filled with monuments of those who were once dear to me, with no insincere wish that it may open for me at no distant period, provided such be the will of God. I shall never see the threescore-and-ten, and shall be summed up at a discount. No help for it, and no matter either." Recovering from a similar slight illness, Wilberforce remarked, "I can scarce understand why my life is spared so long, except it be to show that a man can be as happy without a fortune as with one." And then, soon after, when his only surviving daughter died, he writes, "I have often heard that sailors on a voyage will drink, 'Friends astern,' till they are half way over, then 'Friends ahead.' With me it has been 'friends ahead' this long time."[1]

¶ Shortly after entering his ninety-fourth year, Dr. Martineau wrote to his friend Rev. W. Orme White: "In the romantic moods of early enthusiasm the fancy took me that half my present age would amply test even a slippery soul and might well limit our desire of an eligible probation. Am I not reasonably humbled, then, by being judged in need of detention for a doubled test? And if so, may I perhaps hopefully pray to be not unready for the change of worlds? I dare not affirm; I only know that duty and love look more Divine and the spiritual life more surely immortal than when I thought and spoke of them with less experience. The final mood of living Religion resolves itself for me into filial trust and undying aspiration. Here I can quietly rest, and in some small measure still actively work, till my call comes and takes me to other scenes."[2]

Life! we've been long together,
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather.
'Tis hard to part when friends are dear,
Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear.

Then steal away, give little warning,
Choose thine own time;
Say not good-night, but in some happier clime,
Bid me good-morning.[3]

(4) *To remember God is power and joy all through life.*—Tolstoy said a memorable thing when he wrote, "It is necessary to have a soul." We cannot understand the world without a soul; we

[1] J. Hamilton, *Works*, iii. 215.

[2] *The Life and Letters of James Martineau*, ii. 245.

[3] Mrs. Barbauld.

cannot understand ourselves without it. We cannot even make ourselves what we would like to be without attention to the inward part which we call soul. One of the first and greatest powers for the development of the soul is religion. That word denotes whatever binds us to God, or rather whatever binds us back to God. There is no time in life when religion should have greater power than in youth. Youths sometimes shrink from religion because they believe that it kills all the joy and brightness of life. If they have gathered that from the lives of those who are older, then they who are older have misrepresented it. Religion suffers from the fact that too often it is only when men have strayed into the far country that, in their misery, they say, "I will arise and go to my Father"; that is why religion has a gloomy and saddened look. Those who came late have memories of the bitterness of the past to sadden them. They only hope that they will be taken in as hired servants of the Father. We should look at religion through the lives of the few who have never strayed away, who gave their hearts to God when they were young, and live in the fulness of His love and grace.

¶ Pathetic and melancholy are the words with which Mr. Frederic Harrison, the leader of English Positivism, ends his Autobiography: "I close this book with words that indeed resume in themselves all that I have ever written or spoken during half a century, which is this—that all our mighty achievements are being hampered and often neutralised, all our difficulties are being doubled, and all our moral and social diseases are being aggravated by this supreme and dominant fact—that we have suffered our religion to slide from us, and that in effect our age had no abiding faith in any religion at all. The urgent task of our time is to recover a religious faith as a basis of life both personal and social."[1]

3. Continual remembrance of God encourages the growth of the spirit. Man does not ripen naturally—that is, according to the course of his earthly nature—for eternity. He is the child of spiritual culture. By spiritual toil and effort only, by patience, by pain, by tears, can this crown of a good old age be won. It comes at the end of a good life-course, a course that has been aspiring and tending to God. It is the fruit of a continual renew-

[1] Frederic Harrison, *Autobiographic Memoirs*, ii. 333.

ing, the strengthening and unfolding of the inner man, which is not born of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of "the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever," and "which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." And that nature needs close and constant culture; the weeds in its fields need to be cut down, and their very roots torn up, no matter what sensitive fibres may be lacerated in the process; while the seeds of the Kingdom, the germs which the good Sower has planted, have to be nurtured with many toils and tears, if in our old age we are to wear the look and bearing of men whose harvest has been reaped and is ready for gathering home into the garners of eternity.

¶ No trace of the moroseness of old age appeared in Mr. Gladstone's manners or his conversation, nor did he, though profoundly grieved at some of the events which he witnessed, and owning himself disappointed at the slow advance made by a cause dear to him, appear less hopeful than in earlier days of the general progress of the world, or less confident in the beneficent power of freedom to promote the happiness of his country. The stately simplicity which had always charmed those who saw him in private seemed more beautiful than ever in this quiet evening of a long and sultry day. His intellectual powers were unimpaired, his thirst for knowledge undiminished. But a placid stillness had fallen upon him and his household; and in seeing the tide of his life begin slowly to ebb, one thought of the lines of his illustrious contemporary and friend:

> Such a tide as moving seems asleep,
> Too full for sound and foam,
> When that which drew from out the boundless deep
> Turns again home.[1]

> Call him not old, whose visionary brain
> Holds o'er the past its undivided reign.
> For him in vain the envious seasons roll
> Who bears eternal summer in his soul.
> If yet the minstrel's song, the poet's lay,
> Spring with her birds, or children with their play,
> Or maiden's smile, or heavenly dream of art,
> Stir the warm life-drops creeping round his heart—
> Turn to the record where his years are told—
> Count his grey hairs—they cannot make him old![2]

[1] J. Bryce, *Studies in Contemporary Biography*, 458.
[2] Oliver Wendell Holmes.

# The Whole Duty of Man.

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## The Whole Duty of Man.

**This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.—Eccles. xii. 13.**

1. Of what "matter" is this the conclusion? Ecclesiastes, in the writing of this little book, had a practical object in view. He had not indulged in any elaborate speculation; he had not attempted to solve the riddle of the world. He had simply recorded the results of his own experience and observation; and he had confessed himself unable to fathom the mysteries of Divine Providence. But he felt that he had a practical message for his countrymen. He had laid before them certain maxims for the guidance of their conduct. He had endeavoured to put them in the way of securing the "chief good" of life—of making the best of this present existence, with all its unsatisfying elements, and all its insoluble problems. And now, at the very end of his book, he seeks to drive the nail home, and to clinch all his exhortations by one pithy, pregnant counsel in which he sums up his practical philosophy of life.

And what is the conclusion of the Wise Man's wisdom? "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom!" So the boy had been taught: and now the old man wonders whether it may not be, not only the *beginning*, but the *end*. When so much is dark, is not one path clear? one thing plain? Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man." A life of godliness and virtue—this is the chief good for man. There is no better or deeper satisfaction to be found on earth than that which springs from reverencing God and keeping His commandments. This was the grand "conclusion" at which Ecclesiastes had arrived.

2. This may seem to us a very inadequate result, unworthy of a devout Israelite. It falls short of the faith of David. It is

still further distant from that of a believer in the gospel. We should be tempted to look on one who declared solemnly that the experience of a long life had taught him to acknowledge the sovereignty of God and the eternal law of duty as speaking the language of a heathen. For such an one we should have little hope, or even, it may be, harsh condemnation. But the blessedness of thus apprehending any one article of faith is, that it must needs lead on to others. The words, "Fear God, and keep his commandments," were the simplest of all precepts, and yet one who fixed his heart on them, and strove to live in them, would find himself led perpetually into new regions of truth, new convictions of sin, new forms of holiness.

¶ The central peace of all is not allied with indolent quietude: the nearer to God the deeper the peace, and also the greater the necessity of eager activity. The realm is one of progress. The idea of continued progress in the *Paradiso* receives illustration as we note how the stages of mediæval learning are incorporated in the imagery. The virtues are not to be learned by practice or discipline, as in the *Purgatorio*; they must be effluent from graces already stored in the soul; they must come as from a centre of spiritual force, not as an acquired habit, but as in harmony with the governing impulses of the soul. But when these graces and virtues are thus possessed, more lies beyond. Then the powers of perception and apprehension are enlarged: the spirit can discern God in Nature, God in moral order, God in the very soul itself. The highest capacity reached is the theological, the final knowledge of God, not through any medium, like that of natural or moral order, but in direct spiritual vision.[1]

## I.

### A Right Feeling towards God.

To fear God is to have a heart and mind rightly affected towards Him. It is to have scriptural and realizing views of His being and perfections, of His holy law and government, of His redeeming grace and mercy. It is to know, to reverence, and to love Him, as He is in Christ. Hence it is said that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. cxi. 10). To be destitute

[1] W. Boyd Carpenter, *The Spiritual Message of Dante*, 189.

of it, whatever be the natural gifts and endowments a man may possess, is to be in reality a fool. The fear here in question is not the "fear which hath torment"—the slavish terror resulting from conscious guilt, the dark and disquieting apprehension of coming wrath that haunts the soul laden with unconfessed, unrepented, and therefore unpardoned, sin. No; it is a sentiment wide as the poles asunder from that spirit of bondage. This fear of God of which the author speaks, is the very spirit of adoption. It is the spirit with which the affectionate and dutiful child regards a father—a father whose wisdom he reveres, whose authority he owns, whose goodness has won his heart, whose favour is his chiefest joy, and whose displeasure fills him with grief and shame. The fear of God, accordingly, is, in Scripture, generally put for the whole of true religion in the heart, and is, not infrequently, inclusive also of its practical results in the life. Those who "fear God," and those who have "no fear of God before their eyes," are the two great descriptions of mankind.

1. Fear is not a characteristic of the religion of our age. Increasing knowledge has, according to its usual law, brought increasing familiarity. And it may be questioned whether pious affections have not been weakened and effeminated by the absence of it. In this, as in almost everything else, the pendulum explains the story. We have swung to the extreme on one side, because we had gone too far on the other. Not long ago, we heard little of love, and too much of fear; now, it is almost all love, and no fear. "Love God." "Love God," with our whole heart,—for He is "love." He is our Father. He has "loved us with an everlasting love." There never was a time, in all eternity, when He did not love us. No love like that love, so deep, so true, so faithful, so comprehensive, so minute, so like Himself,—for ever and ever! Love as we will, we shall never reach the deep echo of His love. And all other love, however dear, is only a drop in that one fountain! But let us remember that He is "a great God, and a terrible," "of purer eyes than to behold evil"; and who cannot "look on iniquity." Mercy and truth go before His face; but justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne.

¶ As long as every opportunity that is offered to us means the choice between a wiser and a more foolish, or a nobler and

more ignoble alternative, we shall be liable to choose the worse—not in blindness, but in weakness or passion — and then to recognize our lost opportunity, to feel the actual discord emphasized by the ideal harmony, and to know the anguish of the sense of sin. And when this experience has been ours, we shall know the meaning of the fear of God. Not that fear which drives us in terror to divorce our actions from our affections, and scares us from doing the thing we should still love to do; not the fear of God as of the Divine policeman who is always ready to bring the terrors of the law upon us; but the fear of God which is hardly even another aspect of the love of Him. We see the beauty of holiness, we see the mark of our high calling in communion with Him, we see the greatness of the opportunities of life; and this is the love of God. And we know that if, in yielding to sloth or to passion, we neglect these opportunities, and are content with the lower and the baser part, that harmony which we now feel will have its counterpart in the discord which we shall wake, in the hurt and miserable sense of sin. We know that we cannot escape, though we climb to the top of Carmel, or plunge into the depths of the sea; and this is the fear of God. It is the love of God which inspires our lives; it is the fear of God which protects us in our moments of weakness, when we love the part, rather than the whole, and would find a momentary and local harmony at the price of a permanent and universal discord.[1]

2. How are we to obtain this right feeling? That filial emotion which here and throughout the Old Testament is often called "fear," that blended emotion of reverence and trust, awe and affection, can arise only where the spirit of sonship reciprocates God's revealed aspect of compassionate and forthgoing fatherliness. It matters little whether we call the affection fear, or, with the first and great commandment, call it love. In that fear which realizes God's fatherliness, there cannot be terror; and in the love which recollects that its Father is God there cannot be petulant boldness.

¶ Perfect love does, indeed, cast out fear; for if we loved God perfectly, we should love Him always, and sin would never tempt us. And, therefore, it is in the love of God that the formula of harmony must be sought. Even when conscious of our own sin, conscious of our self-alienation from God, and the discord that it

[1] J. E. Carpenter and P. H. Wicksteed, *Studies in Theology*, 165.

has waked in our being, we must seek to feel the harmony above and below; that the sense of opportunity, of privilege, of glory, of God, may still rise above the sense of failure, of exclusion, of shame, of self; that fear may be nought but an under-agent of love, the sense of sin nought but an undertone in the sense of salvation.[1]

## II.

### A Right Thought towards God.

The fear of God is that coincidence with His good pleasure, and that compliance with His revealed will which is called here keeping His commandments. He is our Creator, and, whether we will or not, we must be His creatures. But He is also the King of the universe, and we ought to be His loyal subjects. Almighty and all-wise, we should devoutly adore Him. Our righteous Ruler, we should with cheerful submission acquiesce in His disposal, and with strenuous activity should fulfil His commands.

1. Now, to obey God's commandments we must know in what they consist. We must have a right thought towards God, a knowledge of His will. The commandments of God are many and very broad. He reveals His will in the natural universe and the laws which govern it—laws which, as we are part of the universe, we need to know and to obey. He reveals His will in the social and political forces which govern the history and development of the various races of mankind, which therefore meet and affect us at every turn. He reveals His will in the ethical intuitions and codes which govern the formation of character, which enter into and give shape to all in us that is most spiritual, profound, and enduring. To keep all the commandments revealed in these immense fields of Divine activity with an intelligent and invariable obedience is simply impossible to us; it is the perfection which flows around our imperfection, and towards which it is our one great task to be ever reaching forth.

¶ Carlyle desired to tell the modern world that, destitute as it and its affairs appeared to be of Divine guidance, God or justice

[1] J. E. Carpenter and P. H. Wicksteed, *Studies in Theology*, 166.

was still in the middle of it, sternly inexorable as ever; that modern nations were as entirely governed by God's law as the Israelites had been in Palestine—laws self-acting and inflicting their own penalties, if man neglected or defied them. And these laws were substantially the same as those on the Tables delivered in thunder on Mount Sinai. You shall reverence your Almighty Maker. You shall speak truth. You shall do justice to your fellow-man. If you set truth aside for conventional and convenient lies; if you prefer your own pleasure, your own will, your own ambition, to purity and manliness and justice, and submission to your Maker's commands, then are whirlwinds still provided in the constitution of things which will blow you to atoms.[1]

2. Throughout this whole Book there is not a single technical allusion, no allusion to the Temple, to the feasts, to the sacrifices, rites, ceremonies of the Law; and therefore we can hardly take this reference to the "commandments" as an allusion to the Mosaic table. By the rules of fair interpretation we are bound to take these commandments as previously defined by the Preacher himself, to understand him as once more enforcing the virtues which, for him, comprised the whole duty of man. And these virtues are: To love our neighbour, to discharge the present duty whatever rain may fall and whatever storm may blow, to carry a bright hopeful spirit through all our toils and charities; to do this in the fear of God, as in His Presence, because He is judging and will judge us.

¶ Modern moralists prefer to ask, not "What is man's chief end," but "What is man's duty; what is the supreme law of his life?" Man's good presents itself to him as an ideal, which he may or may not realize in practice; this is what distinguishes the moral from the natural life. The law of man's life is not, like Nature's, inevitable—it may be broken as well as kept; this is why we call it a moral law. While a physical law, or a law of nature, is simply a statement of what always happens, a moral law is that which ought to be, but never strictly is. The ancients were inclined to regard the end as something to be acquired or got, rather than as an ideal to be attained—as something to be possessed rather than as something to become. The moral ideal is an ideal of character. The claims of righteousness become paramount: do the right though the heavens fall. The end of life is thus an ideal of character, to be realized by the individual,

[1] J. A. Froude, *Thomas Carlyle, 1834–1881*, i. 89.

and his attitude to it is one of obligation or duty to realize it. It is not something to be got or to be done, but to be or to become. It is to be sought not without, but within; it is the man himself, in that true or essential nature, in the realization of which is fulfilled his duty.[1]

## III.

### A Right Will towards God.

But it is not sufficient to have a knowledge of the commandments of God; we must also keep His commandments. What do we mean when we say "keep the commandments"? It is an expression which has lost its force by frequent quotation. To "keep" is *not to lose.* To "keep" is to lay up in the high places of memory. It is to hide a thing down in the recesses of the heart. It is to observe cautiously, to treasure jealously, to hold fast, and never let go.

1. To keep God's commandments, to discharge the various duties which He has appointed—this is the very best use which we can make of life; this is the highest good to which we can attain, amid all the difficulties, disappointments, sorrows, uncertainties, transitoriness and mystery of our present existence. And, in order that our souls may be sustained in living this life of godliness and virtue, we are ever to remember that we are responsible creatures; we are to look forward to a future life and a future judgment. To live in the light of that coming judgment leads us to keep watch even over our secret conduct, and deepens our reverence for all God's holy laws.

¶ Our thought will prosper, and our science, as we realize that it is not the first thing but the second. It does not till then realize its own place and right. To see God and hear Him is prior to all thought about Him or His world. The perception of faith is the condition of any science of God; religion founds all theology. The world we are in is not ours but God's. We therefore revere its reality, and own a wisdom wiser and greater than ours. We do not create truth, but receive it. We do not command it, but obey it. Wisdom is over the thinker who loves it and seeks it. We are *under obligation* to seek and think the

[1] J. Seth, *Ethical Principles.*

truth; we may not merely play with it, we may not loll in the stalls as it passes before us. It is a task, it is not a treat. And we do not legislate for truth; we have to see that the law of thought has its way with us. Our chief act of will is practically recognition of a gift. It is obedience to a grace, even in science.[1]

2. To be animated by true fear is to have a right will towards God—is to have been brought into fellowship with Him as a reconciled God and Father. And hence the inseparable connexion of these two things—fearing God and keeping His commandments. Love is the fulfilling of the law. It is itself the very essence of all true obedience; and wherever it is really shed abroad in the heart, it will, and must, tend to active personal devotedness to God's holy service. To fear God in the sense here intended, and yet to be living in allowed sin—in wilful, practical, habitual opposition to God's commandments—is a contradiction in terms. It is, in truth, a moral impossibility. "For the love of Christ constraineth us," says the Apostle Paul, referring to the necessary and inseparable connexion between a right state of feeling towards God, and a right course of acting—"the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

¶ Catherine analyses with keen insight the relations which redeemed humanity can bear to the Loving God: she tells us how the servant, obedient through fear, may become the friend, obedient through gratitude and desire for spiritual blessings; and how these lower loves, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, may be transformed into the love of the son, who seeks God for His own sake, "with nothing between." And how shall human love, when it has reached this point, reflect the love of Him who "needs not man's work nor His own gifts"? How become, not merely receptive, but active and creative? Catherine gives the simple Christian answer: "God has loved us without being loved, but we love Him because we are loved. . . . We cannot be of any profit to Him, nor love Him with this first love. Yet God demands of us, that as He has loved us without any second thoughts, so He should be loved by us. In what way can we do this, then, since He demands it of us and we cannot give it to

[1] P. T. Forsyth, *The Principle of Authority*, 111.

Him? I tell you: through a means which He has established by which we can love Him freely, and without the least regard to any profit of ours: we can be useful, not to Him, which is impossible, but to our neighbour. To show the love we have to Him, we ought to serve and love every rational creature. Every virtue receives life from love, and love is gained in love, that is, by raising the eye of our mind to behold how much we are beloved of God. Seeing ourselves loved, we cannot do otherwise than love."[1]

3. The New Testament fully endorses the idea that the "chief good" for man lies in a life of godliness and virtue. The gospel, it is true, seeks to infuse a spirit of love and trust into our reverence for God; but it does not abolish this reverence. It reveals to us a "Father in heaven" whose "name" is to be "hallowed." It proclaims, indeed, the forgiving mercy of God, and offers pardon to the "chief of sinners"; but it does not lessen the sanctity of God's law, or relax the demands of that law on our conscience. It points us to our great High Priest who has offered the perfect sacrifice of Himself upon the cross. It gives us a still larger view of the Divine commandments, and seeks to bring us into harmony with their inmost spirit. It does not "make void the law through faith"; it "establishes the law." The Saviour whom it proclaims to us is the King whom we are bound to obey, and who said, "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets; I came not to destroy, but to fulfil."

¶ True religion is no mere mystic passive dream of devotion—a gazing in rapt reverence on the mystery of godliness, and no more. It is a system also of high comprehensive delicate law, which demands daily determined obedience. It is a doing and a being. The righteousness of Christ is excelling; it signifies infinitely more than civil law, social courtesy, or ecclesiastical discipline. It means a noble heart governing daily life in its most delicate relations and situations. It is no "rule of thumb," but of finer discriminations than the most exquisite instruments of science. Let me not mistakenly spend life in arguing down and arguing away the lofty laws of Christ. Let me not labour to accommodate them to my weakness. Let me daily pray for the grace that will bring me up to the height of the law, and not attempt to bring down the law to my frailty.[2]

[1] V. D. Scudder, *Letters of Saint Catherine of Siena*, 79. [2] W. L. Watkinson.

# Separated Lovers.

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## Separated Lovers.

**Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth,**
**Where thou feedest thy flock, where thou makest it to rest at noon:**
**For why should I be as one that is veiled**
**Beside the flocks of thy companions?—Song of Songs i. 7.**

1. The popular poetry of Israel would be a blank had there not been handed down to us the beautiful poem, springing out of the very life of the people, which is named The Song of Songs. This exquisite production reveals to us that, while the poetic genius of the Hebrew nation soared to its highest flights in the expression of religious emotion, there were also poets capable of giving utterance in song to the most universal of all human emotions. The Sacred Canon abounds in writings which view the religious aspect of human life in manifold ways, but the reader may be thankful that one piece has been included which gives lyric expression to what has inspired poets in every age and every country. Old Testament literature would have been incomplete without this poem of human love.

From indications contained in the poem itself, we can easily see the drift of the story which lies behind it, and on the basis of which it develops its action. The little town of Shunem (now called Solam) in the tribe of Issachar, five miles from Mount Tabor, lying among the mountains which overlook the fruitful plain of Jezreel, was the home of the heroine, the "girl from Shulem" (*l* and *n* being interchangeable in Hebrew). To the north and east the roads lead to the Galilean mountain region full of variegated charms, to the lordly Tabor and the beautiful shores of the Lake of Gennesaret. South and west the prospect extends over the once richly cultivated highland of Ephraim and the noble wooded headland of Carmel, falling into the Western Sea. Not far away at Baal-hamon, King Solomon had a large and profitable vineyard. In this little town of Shulem lived a family comprising a

mother, an only daughter, and two brothers. The father is not mentioned and presumably was dead, since the brothers appear as the natural guardians of their sister. The family were possessors of vineyards and gardens. The girl was remarkable for beauty and grace, and possessed a fine voice. She had won and returned the love of a young farmer living not far away, the possessor of flocks of sheep. Their first happy meeting had taken place under an apple tree not far from the girl's home, and joyful meetings had followed under overarching trees, and at other pleasant places of resort. The relation had been a happy and a pure one: he calls her "sister betrothed," she thinks of him as "like a brother." The brothers, however, anxious for their sister's honour, and disliking a relation somewhat opposed to Oriental strictness in such matters, sent her away from home, to be a watcher in the vineyards. The time was the early spring, and she had been long enough in this employment to be scorched by the sun. One day she had gone down to the nut-garden to observe the new growths of the spring, when her attention was caught by a glittering train, "the chariots of a prince's retinue," namely, King Solomon, with a large number of the ladies of his court. These ladies saw and admired the country beauty; she wished to withdraw, but was called back by the admiring ladies. What happened next is not told except in its unhappy sequel, "The king has brought me into his apartments," and it is there we find her as the poem opens, longing to run away.

It will be seen that the poet presents here a most interesting complication to be unravelled in his poem. The king is set against the young farmer. Will the majesty of the king, the glory of his surroundings, his presents, and his flattering persuasions, and the praises of his court ladies, prevail against this country girl, or will she be able to resist these allurements and remain faithful to him whom her soul loves? Will her country lover have the devotion and courage to follow her to Jerusalem, seek out where she is detained, and find an opportunity of strengthening her resistance and animating her courage? Is the end to be that the Shulammite girl is to become one of the "innumerable girls" in a royal harem, or the honourable wife of a farmer in Galilee? The poet makes us feel that a moral issue is involved, and prepares us to follow with the liveliest sympathy

the fate of the pure girl in her struggle against overwhelming odds.[1]

¶ I have been told, by the friend to whom the interesting statement was made by the late Laureate, that Tennyson was so impressed by the literary beauty of the Canticle, and by its evident intention to represent the victory of a loyal human love over strong temptation, that he confessed his desire to write a dramatic work on the theme of the Song, which might help the English reading public to become better acquainted with the invaluable teaching of the Old Testament poem. In his *West-Östlicher Divan*, Goethe also expresses his sense of the incomparable charm of the Canticle, which he characterizes as the most tender and inimitable poem that has come down to us of impassioned expression and graceful love. He laments the fragmentary nature of its poetry, but dwells with delight on the vivid glimpses it gives us of rural life and love in ancient Canaan. Its chief theme, he says, is the glowing mutual attraction of youthful hearts, which seek and find one another, separate and draw together again, in a manner absolutely unique. He confesses that he had often thought of doing something to bring out more clearly the meaning of this exquisite entanglement of songs, but deemed it best to leave the little piece with its own aroma of enigma and its uniqueness.[2]

2. Now, if the dramatic character of the Canticle is taken for granted, it may be asked, Did its author intend it to be read only as a story of human love? Did he not also mean it to be symbolical of spiritual things? To that question no certain answer can be made, though some considerations give to the affirmative reply a distinct colour of probability. Yet if the author intended only to tell the story of the Shulammite's love, why should *his* intention hinder *us* from regarding that story as an apparent sign of things unapparent? Since the poem is part of the great unity of Scripture, it may well be *typical*, looking forward for its ultimate explanation to that full-orbed revelation of the Divine love which it is the purpose of Holy Scripture to reflect. A type so exquisite will help, not hinder, faith.

¶ Saintly souls like George Bowen of Bombay, have declared that when their heart burned within them no Scripture was found so fit as the Canticle to express the fervour of their aspiration and communion with God. It were weakness on the part of

[1] W. W. Canon. [2] H. Falconer, *The Maid of Shulam*, 11.

Christian faith to waive its claim to a symbol so well adapted to its ends. "Nothing in nature," says Emerson, "is exhausted in its first use. . . . When a thing has served an end to the uttermost, it is wholly new for an ulterior service." Air is given us to *breathe*, but who shall blame us if we also frame it into *words* that shall be airy servitors of the soul? Love is admirable for its own sake, but why should not a perfect human affection be to us a parable of the Love transcendent and immanent of which it is a manifestation? Whoso has felt the Spirit of the Highest should be quick to discern His presence and token in every lovely thing.[1]

The text, then, taken as the human analogy of a love that is Divine, suggests

I. The Ideal Shepherd of Men.

II. The Soul's Longing for Fellowship with Him.

## I.

### The Shepherd.

1. The most mysterious figure in the Canticle is that of the Shepherd. He does not make his appearance through the whole course of the drama except in the trances of the Shulammite; and when in the last act he comes forward for one moment in company with her, it is only to ask her for a song, to hear her voice; then he vanishes. The dwelling-place of this mysterious being is no less aerial than himself. We must look for him amidst the "gardens of balsam," the "fields of lilies," and the spiced mountains. And his character is ideal as well as his dwelling-place. He has all the attributes that constitute perfection in the opinion of the Hebrews: perfect beauty, boundless liberty, absolute wisdom. It is through these qualities that he eclipses in the eyes of the Shulammite even the magnificence of Solomon; so much so, that one may truly say that "the Shulammite loves in her shepherd the *ideal* and the prototype of her people."

But if we recognize this ideal character of the shepherd, we are compelled to go one step further. The Israelite ideal is not a mere idea; it is a living, a Divine Being. It is Jehovah Himself, the Being whose Name signifies not only "He who *is*," but "He who *shall be*," Jehovah manifesting Himself in this lower world, in order

[1] H. Falconer, *The Maid of Shulam*, 30.

to realize in it the absolute good; it is God emerging from His condition of transcendence (as *Elohim*, or *El-Shaddai*), to draw near to the world, to unite Himself ever more closely with humanity, to make His appearance at last in person, in a human form, on the scene of history. This was the living ideal of the Israelitish consciousness, which it has pursued without intermission through all its trials, and which it can never give up without self-contradiction. This is the Shulammite's beloved one. He it is who pastures His flock in the ethereal regions above these gross realities of terrestrial existence in which His loved one is still living; He it is who descends from time to time from these heights, and in prophetic visions appears to her who has given Him her heart; taking her, as it were, by surprise; He it is who loves her with a holy and austere love, offering her nothing for the gratification of the senses, but giving Himself to her with the most entire devotion; He it is who in return for His infinite condescension asks no more of her than the sound of her voice, the worship of the heart inspired by love.

¶ The benediction pronounced by Jacob on Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, is perhaps the finest ever uttered by dying lips. Jacob puts into it his most thankful and joyful thoughts about God. He invokes Him as the God who has shepherded himself all his life long—the God of providence; as the Angel who has redeemed him from all evil—the God of grace; and he prays Him who has been all this and done all this to bless the lads. Jacob's Shepherd, who has been tending and leading and feeding him so long, will do just the same for the lambs of His flock. Our English Version misses something of the beauty of Jacob's words. The translation "who hath fed me" is too meagre. We need to say, "who hath shepherded me." The same word is the keynote of the finest of all the Psalms: "The Lord is my shepherd." It is a beautiful metaphor, which comes with an exquisite pathos and a profound significance from the lips of a dying shepherd. The poets of a later age could only echo his words: "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock." All the tender grace of the Old Testament religion is found in this lovely conception. It was not one man or two, but a whole nation that learned to believe in God as a Shepherd: "We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." No other ancient nation ever expected from God such loving care and unerring guidance, no other nation ever promised such meek

submission and faithful following. And while the Hebrew temple and sacrifice and priesthood have passed away as the shadows of better things, the Hebrew thought of a Shepherd-God will live for ever.[1]

2. The shepherd devotes himself to the sheep. He leads them to pasture in the morning and makes them lie down to rest at noon. In a true sense he gives his life daily for the flock. This pastoral image is one of singular beauty and force, and to an Oriental was even more powerful and suggestive than it is to us. Among us the connexion between a shepherd and his sheep is one of pecuniary interest. An English shepherd values his flock simply at its market value, and as a means of gain. But in the East the relation evokes higher and more generous feelings. The dumb, helpless creatures form a strong affection for the man who has often to risk his life for their safety. They are every moment exposed to danger, and may be swept away by some mountain torrent, carried off by hordes of robbers, or torn in pieces by wild beasts. The shepherd must be constantly on the watch against these foes, and must often climb high rocks and ford deep streams to preserve his flock alive. And the sheep cling to him with a feeling of trustfulness, follow him, and do not need, as our sheep need, to be driven. They are discontented and restless when he is out of their sight. He knows each of them by its special name; he calls out a name, and the sheep which bears it will run to his side. The love of the strong and willing protector is flashed back in the gratitude and trust of the protected. In the light of this fact we must interpret this Oriental image. Christ is the Good Shepherd, as shepherds are known in the East, whose sheep are the companions of their daily life, and are valued by them the more in proportion to the risks they have endured for them. The image calls to mind a love of infinite condescension and grace; a love which stoops from its lofty height in heaven and remembers us in our low estate; knows the name, the character, the trials, and the needs of each one of us; thinks for us, cares for us, dies for us, that we may be saved from our adversaries and guided to the heavenly Kingdom. This is a love which thinks of each separate sheep with a care as minute and a self-denial as complete

[1] J. Strachan, *Hebrew Ideals*, ii. 147.

as if there were no other need in all the vast universe to be supplied.

¶ The sword in the world, the right eye plucked out, the right hand cut off, the spirit of reproach which those images express, and of which monasticism is the fulfilment, reflect one side only of the nature of the Divine missionary of the New Testament. Opposed to, yet blent with, this ascetic or militant character is the image of the Good Shepherd—favourite sacred image of the primitive church—serene, blithe, and debonair, beyond the gentlest shepherd of Greek mythology; the daily food of whose spirit is the beatific vision of the kingdom of peace among men. And this latter side of the Divine character of Christ, rightly understood, is the final achievement of that vein of bold and brilliant hopefulness in man which had sustained him so far through his immense labour, his immense sorrows; and of which that peculiarly Greek *gaiety*, in the handling of life, is but one manifestation. Sometimes one, sometimes the other, of these two contrasted aspects of the character of Christ have, in different ages and under the urgency of differing human needs, been at work also in His "mystical body."[1]

¶ "Christ feeds His people," says Cruden, "by His word, grace, fulness, redemption, ordinances, providences"; but no one of these can, of itself, make life stronger. We must stir up ourselves to meet them. The words of Scripture may simply encumber our memories, because we have not adventure of heart to lay hold upon them. There is an indolent and sulky habit of mind to which nothing seems right, just as there is a frank and eager attitude to which every new experience comes as a benediction.[2]

3. This shepherd seeks to develop character in his flock. For it is not sheep that God cares for first, and a great deal which might be imagined as to a shepherd's work and way is out of all relation to the Divine guidance of men. "Ye, my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, are men," says Ezekiel; and the difference is enormous when that is borne in mind. Sheep are to us the very pattern of creatures without judgment or foresight, and the whole business of managing them proceeds on that footing. They must be thought for, and guarded against their own folly, whilst men are best led by practising them in leading themselves, and

[1] Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean.*

[2] W. M. Macgregor, *Some of God's Ministries*, 9.

sometimes they can be finally delivered from folly only by being permitted to taste their folly to the end. Sheep are driven on unknowing, whilst men have every moment to choose, decide, adventure for themselves. If it were possible, over any lengthened period, to have the life of a community ruled as sheep are, we should have, in the end, not men but sheep—helpless, planless, characterless, a race destroyed. Sometimes an effort has been made to break away from this principle of life, and, as in the Jesuit rule, to put one man absolutely in the hands of another, the passive instrument of his will, *perinde ut cadaver*: but such experiments have never worked for good. Both human nature and the thought of God the Shepherd are clean against them.

¶ Jowett says, "We should speak of conscience, duty, obligation, not of development and evolution; because we desire to strengthen that side of man which raises him above nature, not that which identifies him with it." And the real glory of God the Shepherd can only be seen when we do justice to our human liberty. An absolutist God would have nothing but a race of puppets, and thus He would be a little God; but our God is a great God, and His creatures are men; and the wisdom by which He guides them, in their liberty, is a wisdom that is inexhaustible.[1]

¶ We find our outside world by acting always as if it were there, assuming that it is what it professes to be; and by finding our action always justified by results. And in the moral sphere it is the same. We act here as though we were morally free agents, able to choose between good and evil, and we find that the moral system responds to our action. It justifies our faith. The moral struggle assures us that we are not machines, but free agents, creating our character by a moral volition. By doing, we reach the conviction of a world above nature, a world of the inner life, whose laws are other than those of force and necessity—above them, using them for its higher ends. In our contact with the visible world, as in our contact with the invisible, we live by faith. For action is simply faith in operation. It were impossible except for a belief in the truth of things; and it is rewarded by the response which all things, visible and invisible, make to it. "So long as we strive we believe, and so long as we believe we strive." It is, in fact, in doing things that we create ourselves. Action is the proof, the declaration of our freedom. By it we bring into being something that was never in the world

[1] W. M. Macgregor, *Some of God's Ministries*, 7.

before—our character, our personality. And when, in the exercise of our free volition, in obedience to the inner call of the spirit, we go on choosing the good, we find in the act itself the assurance of a foothold in a higher realm, a possession there, from which no reasoning can shake us, for it is rooted in the deeps of consciousness. We know ourselves as of a kingdom of the Unseen, whose laws are above those of matter, and whose possessions are secure from all material assault.[1]

## II.

### The Cry for Fellowship.

1. The thought of the shepherd awakens the passionate love of the soul. As there are attributes in God which fill us with a sense of reverence and awe, which command our homage, and vindicate our faith and submission, so there are others which appeal directly to our love; and in view of His condescension, long-suffering, and self-sacrifice, it is impossible not to feel the glow of a responsive affection. Our nature is so framed that in the presence of certain objects it inevitably displays certain feelings. There are correspondences between the world without and the world within. One class of objects is fitted to awaken our admiration, our approval and delight; another class creates a sense of aversion and disgust. To be true, to be just and upright, is to have affections which truth, justice, and integrity call into play whenever we are brought into contact with them; as there are other affections which are inevitably awakened by gentleness, compassion, and generosity. If we are brought into contact with these qualities as they exist in men, the feelings which correspond with them are at once aroused—we admire, revere, and love. Can such feelings, then, be dormant when we apprehend these high qualities as they exist in God, when He who possesses these attributes of truth, righteousness, and mercy *in an infinite degree* reveals them to us?

¶ Bishop Butler, who was certainly no enthusiast, and who looked at every subject in the dry light of the intellect, is yet filled with intense emotion as he discourses of the love of God. "Love, reverence, desire, and esteem—every faculty, every

[1] J. Brierley, *Religion and To-Day*, 258.

affection—tends towards, and is employed about, its respective object in common cases; and must the exercise of men be suspended with regard to Him alone who is an object, an infinitely more than adequate object, to our most exalted faculties, Him of whom and through whom and to whom are all things?" It cannot be. To suppress such feelings, in the presence of the majesty and condescension of God, would be to violate our nature and reduce ourselves below the level of man.[1]

2. The soul naturally seeks the presence of the shepherd. "Tell me where thou feedest thy flock." It is a perfectly legitimate thing to desire a close, personal intimacy with our Saviour. We may without presumption aspire to dwell in the light of His countenance, to receive the choicest gifts of His grace, to be nourished and refreshed in His pastures. There is no virtue in spiritual timidity. High and holy aspirations are not Pharisaical conceit. We ought not to be contented with a dwarfed and maimed Christianity, with an imperfect righteousness or a disturbed peace. The poorest man that lives has a perfect right to open the doors and windows of his house to the light of the sun and to the fresh and healthy atmosphere. In everything we should seek to attain the highest and to do the best. And if Christ is a Saviour at all, we ought to desire His best and choicest blessings. If He welcomes us in our sin and sorrow, He will not spurn our endeavours to be always near Him. Rather does He bid us follow Him and so act, in obedience to His commands, that His love may be manifested in us, and that we may know whom we have believed.

¶ I am in no doubt whatever of the loving intention of the Father to me, His very frail and wilful child. Sin and doubt and fear very often overcome me, and I know how little reason I give to others to be recognized as a Christian; but I do recognize Christ as my Lord and master, and would keep His will, if I could; and though I go astray like a sheep that is lost, I do indeed know that my Shepherd follows me and seeks me; I discern Him moving towards the dawn; His hand guides me, puts aside the thorny branches through which I could not press, leads me beside the waters of comfort. I can dare to be joyful beneath His eye. I do not know what the end will be, or what eager energy of life lies beyond the dark river; but I am redeemed and fed, and shall some day be satisfied![2]

[1] J. Stuart.

[2] A. C. Benson, *Thy Rod and Thy Staff*, 95.

3. In seeking the shepherd's fellowship, the heart can present a powerful plea. "Why should I be as one that is veiled" (or, possibly, "one that wanders") "beside the flocks of thy companions?" This image must be interpreted in the light of Oriental customs. The shepherds are often found in companies, and go forth from the city with their flocks massed together as if they formed but one. Then, when they are clear of the city, they take each a separate path, call their sheep after them, and go to their own pastures. There are, therefore, several flocks tended each by its own shepherd. But there is only one flock to which the Hebrew maiden could repair, one shepherd to whom she belonged; and she desired to hear his voice and follow him. The flocks of his companions have necessarily to be regarded as alien and even rival flocks, with which she has no right to associate. Her question is, "Why should I be as one that turneth aside by these alien flocks; asking for thee, as if I were a wanderer and a deserter; under a temptation to desert thee, and to be seized upon as prey by others? Tell me where thou feedest, that I may dwell with thee, and may be known as thine."

In actual life other lords than Christ claim to rule over us. There are rivals to His throne, usurpers of His honour, who promise to us pleasure and delight in the pursuits of sin and worldliness; or assure us that we do not need the aid of Christ's mediatorial work and supernatural revelation; that we cannot know God as He is here declared; that we need only follow the guidance of reason and of common sense; that science, philosophy, and political economy are adequate means of instruction, and set before us "the whole duty of man"; that the idea of personal fellowship with God is a chimera; that the aim of life is pleasure or profit, and that it is folly to spend our thought in care for the future. There are intellectual and social influences at work around us, some of them apparently harmless, which are profoundly hostile to the reign of Christ in our souls; and we can be kept free from subjection to these only by living in the spirit of the prayer of our text, and having that prayer answered. We need the personal guidance of our Lord: "Why should I be as one that turneth aside?"—not knowing where to find Thee, and being compelled to ask others, as perchance they reproach me, "Where is now thy God?"

¶ When Tigranes and his wife were both taken prisoners by Cyrus, Cyrus turning to Tigranes said, "What will you give for the liberation of your wife?" and the king answered, "I love my wife so that I would cheerfully give up my life if she might be delivered from servitude"; whereupon Cyrus said that if there was such love as that between them they might both go free. So when they were away and many were talking about the beauty and generosity of Cyrus, and especially about the beauty of his person, Tigranes, turning to his wife, asked her what she thought of Cyrus, and she answered that she saw nothing anywhere but in the face of the man who had said that he would die if she might only be released from servitude. "The beauty of the man," she said, "makes me forget all others." And verily we would say the same of Jesus. We would not decry the angels, nor think ill of the saints, but the beauties of that Man who gave His life for us are so great that they have eclipsed others, and our soul only wishes to see Him and not another.[1]

Long did I toil, and knew no earthly rest;
Far did I rove, and found no certain home:
At last I sought them in His sheltering breast,
Who opes His arms, and bids the weary come.
With Him I found a home, a rest divine;
And I since then am His, and He is mine.

Yes, He is mine! and nought of earthly things,
Not all the charms of pleasure, wealth, or power,
The fame of heroes, or the pomp of kings,
Could tempt me to forego His love an hour.
Go, worthless world, I cry, with all that's thine!
Go! I my Saviour's am, and He is mine.

The good I have is from His stores supplied:
The ill is only what He deems the best.
He for my friend, I'm rich with nought beside;
And poor without Him, though of all possessed.
Changes may come—I take, or I resign,
Content, while I am His, while He is mine.[2]

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

[2] H. F. Lyte, *Poems Chiefly Religious*, 75.

# Spring-Time.

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## SPRING-TIME.

**For, lo, the winter is past,**
**The rain is over and gone;**
**The flowers appear on the earth;**
**The time of the singing of birds is come,**
**And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;**
**The fig tree ripeneth her green figs,**
**And the vines are in blossom,**
**They give forth their fragrance.**
**Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.**
**—Song of Songs, ii. 11–13.**

IN Britain, spring is the most beautiful season of all the year; but in Palestine it stands out in more strongly pronounced contrast to the three other seasons, and it is in itself exceedingly lovely. While summer and autumn are there parched with drought, barren and desolate, and while winter is often dreary with snow-storms and floods of rain, in spring the whole land is one lovely garden, ablaze with richest hues, hill and dale, wilderness and farmland vying in the luxuriance of their wild flowers, from the red anemone that fires the steep sides of the mountains to the purple and white cyclamen that nestles among the rocks at their feet. Much of the beauty of this poem is found in the fact that it is pervaded by the spirit of an Eastern spring. This makes it possible to introduce a wealth of beautiful imagery which would not have been appropriate if any other season had been chosen. Palestine is even more lovely in March than England is in May; so that this poem, which is so completely bathed in the atmosphere of early spring, calls up echoes of the exquisite English garden pictures in Shelley's *Sensitive Plant* and Tennyson's *Maud*.

¶ There are good men to whom the din of the streets is more welcome than the songs of birds in the spring-time. Dr. Johnson hated the quiet places of nature, and was never happy except in the thick of life; Socrates had no love for green field and garden, all his interests were among men; and even St. Paul, if we may

judge from his writings, found his raptures in work done among the human throng, and was not keenly sensitive to the natural things which his Master loved. We do not envy these men in that one particular. They were great, richly endowed souls, with one sweet capacity missing. We thank God that we have it, that most good men have it in large measure. It is a gift of God with a touch of heaven in it. It makes the whole world a temple, especially in the spring-time, with stained windows and altar lights and innumerable choristers; it makes us hear speech in a thousand languages to which other ears are deaf.[1]

1. "The winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth." There is a sigh of glad relief in the words, as if some long pain had gone, as if some nightmare had been lifted up, and the spirit of joy had come dancing into our lives again. The winter is long; at least we always feel it long. It is like an unwelcome guest that prolongs its stay. It will not regulate its movements by the calendar. The day for its departure is fixed, but it tarries. It seems to go a dozen times, and comes back again. The spring-time comes with lingering feet. It has to fight with winter for every inch of ground gained. It is like the slow battle of goodness against evil, with the long-deferred result.

That weary time that comes between
The last snow and the earliest green!
One barren clod the wide fields lie,
And all our comfort is the sky.

We know the sap is in the tree,—
That life at buried roots must be;
Yet dreary is the earth we tread,
As if her very soul were dead.

Before the dawn the darkest hour,
The blank and chill before the flower!
Beauty prepares this background gray
Whereon her loveliest tints to lay.

Ah, patience! ere we dream of it,
Spring's fair new gospel will be writ.
Look up! Good only can befall
While heaven is at the heart of all![2]

[1] J. G. Greenhough. [2] Lucy Larcom, *Between Winter and Spring.*

2. All through the cold, the forces which make the miracle of spring are gathering in the earth. Down below in every root and seed life is accumulating itself. It is forced down by darkness and cold, but it is not killed; the bitterer the skies above, the harder the crust of the earth, the intenser is the concentration of life. Nor is it quite without its work, though it is hidden. For it fills the sheaths of the buds with the folded leaves; it weaves the down that protects them, it builds within them, in the centre, the glory and beauty of the flower. It prepares itself for its rush and outburst. At last, the burden of darkness and frost and bitter wind is lifted off, the climate changes, and straightway the imprisoned life expands and ripples upwards, the potential energy becomes dynamic, the stored-up sunlight and heart break forth in leaf and blossom to the sunlight, and over a thousand woods and fields apparent death leaps into apparent life.

"Where are the snowdrops?" said the sun;
"Dead," said the frost,
"Buried and lost,
Every one!"

"A foolish answer," said the sun;
"They did not die,
Asleep they lie,
Every one!"

"And I will wake them, I the sun,
Into the light,
All clad in white,
Every one!"

¶ Last year I was in Surrey at the end of April, for a single day, and walked through the woods of Albury. There had been abundance of rain the night before, but the sunlight of the day was bright, and every leaf, tree, and flower was glittering with waterdrops. In the warm mist everything seemed to grow with more swiftness, and the old phrase, that if one stayed in the silence and listened, one could hear the grass growing, seemed literally true. Life ran to the end of every spray, and rushed into a million leaves and flowers; and I thought that no human passion could be more intense than that with which the young leaves of the beech burst from their long sheath; no light in human eyes

more suggestive of fulness of life within the heart than the gold and green glory of light that rained upon me through the unnumbered foliage of the limes. A step further, and the sky seemed to have fallen on the earth, for where the wood opened a little, a great slope, as far as the eye could reach up and down, was clothed with a myriad-flowered mist of bluebells; it seemed as if all the life of the earth had given itself to make them, so multitudinous were they; and as to the primroses, a bank of which I came to by-and-by, so rich was the life in them that I counted fifty flowers springing from a single root, and there were thousands of plants in that sunny place. It was the same in everything, everywhere incalculable, inexhaustible, rushing life, life that never rested, never wearied.[1]

3. The coming of spring awakens new energies in man as well as in nature. No one who hears the warm west wind of April flowing through the trees, and feels the secret stirring that it makes in blood and brain, but knows the influence of spring upon the body. As the sap ran upwards through the flowers, so the blood went swifter through the veins, and the physical emotion sent its message to that immaterial life of thought and feeling which we call the spirit. And the spirit, receiving the impressions, took and moulded them into ideas by the imagination and sent the ideas forth to give motives to the will. If those ideas are dull or sensual, the new bodily life that comes with spring will only serve to make life more commonplace or our passions more degraded. If they are poetical, or enkindling, linked to high aspirations and pure thoughts, then the quickened powers of the body will be restrained from evil, impelled to finer work, hallowed and dignified under the command of a will directed by such thoughts.

¶ It was that peculiar period of spring which most powerfully affects a human soul: a bright, illuminating, but not warm sun, rivulets and thawed spots, an aromatic freshness in the air, and a gently azure sky with long, transparent clouds. I was in a very bad and dissatisfied mood. Everything somehow went against me. I wanted to get angry and to grumble; I recalled that we had to go to confession that very day, and that I had to abstain from everything bad. Suddenly a meek spirit came over me. Through the open window the fresh, fragrant air penetrated the room and filled it. Through the window was heard the din

[1] Stopford A. Brooke, *The Fight of Faith*, 327.

of the city and the chirping of the sparrows in the garden. I went up to the window, sat upon it, bent down to the garden, and fell to musing. A novel, exceedingly powerful and pleasant sensation suddenly penetrated into my soul. The damp earth through which here and there burst bright-green blades of grass with their yellow stalks; the rills glistening in the sun, along which meandered pieces of earth and chips; the blushing twigs of the lilac bushes with their swelling buds swaying under the very window; the busy chirping of the birds that swarmed in the bushes; the black fence wet with the thawing snow; but above all, that aromatic moist air and joyous sun spoke to me distinctly and clearly of something new and beautiful, which, though I am not able to tell it as it appeared to me, I shall attempt to tell as I conceived it. Everything spoke to me of beauty, happiness, and virtue; it told me that all that was easy and possible for me, that one thing could not be without the other, and even that beauty, happiness, and virtue were one and the same. "How was it I did not understand it before? As bad as I was in the past, so good and happy shall I become in the future!" I said to myself, "I must go at once, this very minute, become another man, and live another life."[1]

4. Nor does the influence of spring come only to the body As we breathe the soft new air, and see the green cloud gather on the trees, a thousand memories come back; life is re-lived from the first primrose gathering in childhood to the wonder and joy of last year, when we looked up through the snow of a roof of apple-blossoms to the blue air. Early love, early sorrow, later and wilder passions, the aspirations of youth, the ideals that made the life of lonely wanderings, the thoughts with which we took up work when manhood called us to the front of the battle, the graver thoughts that came when we laid aside hopes too impossible to realize, are all felt, pursued, and longed for, more deeply far in the stirring airs of spring. Every new spring reawakens them all to life within us. With their memories, as with flowers, the meadows of our heart are covered. We walk among them, and as we walk a gentler, tenderer, more receptive temper fills our being. We throw open all the gates of the heart.

¶ Milton tells us that the Muses always came back to him in spring. He could not sing very much, as a rule, in winter, but

[1] Tolstoy, *Youth*, chap. ii. (*Works*, i. 255).

when spring came back the Muses came. He caught the youthfulness and hopefulness of spring; he looked round, and saw life springing triumphantly out of the grave of winter: he saw the feeblest growths rejoice in a new life and beauty. Then, too, his own intellect, under the blessing and inspiration of a spring sky, began to blossom anew.[1]

"It's rather dark in the earth to-day,"
Said one little bulb to his brother,
"But I thought that I felt a sun-beam ray;
We must strive and grow till we find the way!"
And they nestled close to each other.
And they struggled and toiled by day and by night,
Till two little snowdrops in green and in white
Rose out of the darkness into the light,
And softly kissed each other.

5. The coming of spring is a parable of the resurrection. Every returning spring-time is a confirmation of our Easter hopes. For it is a parable of that resurrection and restoration of nature which the Bible says is to accompany "the liberty of the glory of the children of God." It is not man alone that will be glorified. Not apart from the struggling, yearning creation round about him will he reach perfection. His lot is bound up in hers for joy as for sorrow. The resurrection will not *free* man from his oneness with nature; it will *express* that oneness in a form that will fill uncreated beings with wonder and praise. It is so often implied by religious writers, even if not expressed, that with the last great resurrection the natural world passes away. On the contrary, St. Paul's philosophy of resurrection is in nothing more wonderful than in the place which it gives to nature. In that philosophy he is confirmed, as he in turn confirms its reasoned conclusions, by the investigations of recent science. For he takes his stand on the solidarity between man and nature, and on the common character of their destiny. The same great principles of finality, of travail, of hope which mark man's being mark also the world round about him. "The creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we

[1] D. Davies, *Talks with Men, Women and Children*, v. 174.

know," he adds, "that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Towards the same great goal man and creation, therefore, alike are hastening. "The times of restoration of all things" prophesied since the world began, "the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory," are to be marked by the final bridals of man and nature. Together redeemed man and restored nature are to shape one glorious future, as they have shared one shadowed and chequered past. As yet neither is perfectly fitted for that future, and hence the life of man in nature is not yet—what one day it will be—truly natural. Nor has nature yet on her side become what one day she will become—the perfect vehicle of spirit. These two futures are slowly but surely converging towards each other across the ages, and one day they will meet in the world's golden eventide, as Isaac met Rebekah and was "comforted" after his sorrow. And then will nature

> Set herself to man,
> Like perfect music unto noble words;
> And so these twain, upon the skirts of time,
> Sit side by side, full summed in all their powers
> Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-Be.

¶ Shakespeare has nothing more beautiful than the closing scene in his *Winter's Tale*. The long-lost, long-mourned wife of Leontes, Hermione, unknown to him, lives all the while, and is given back to him after years of separation, the happy victim of a loving plot prepared for his own after-pleasure. Ushered into the chapel of the house of Paulina, her true friend, he beholds what he imagines to be her lovely statue, till slowly it glides towards him; then offers him her hand, and hangs upon him in loving embrace. The statue has become his long-lost wife, risen as it were from her grave, and moving with tenderness of grace across the long interval of years, to fling herself once more upon his arms. But Leontes himself is chastened by the long bitter years which prepare him for this moment, and when the vision of his former joy comes, he is ready to welcome it. When man himself has been disciplined by the long ages of waiting, then shall the end which brings fruition and realization to every pure earthly

hope come. Nature, quickened in Christ out of her long winter sleep, shall move to him across those ages of separation which sin has made, his true bride, speaking to his heart the music of a long-forgotten language, waking in him the buried instincts of love, calling him to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense.[1]

¶ In the Resurrection, Giotto has combined two subjects. On one side we have the white-robed Angels seated on the red porphyry tomb, with the soldiers, sunk in deep slumber at their feet. On the other, the risen Lord, bearing the flag of victory in His hand, is in the act of uttering the words "Noli me tangere" to the Magdalen, who, wrapt in her crimson mantle, falls at his feet, exclaiming, "Rabboni!"—Master. No master of later times ever painted so touching and beautiful a Magdalen as this one with the yearning eyes and the passion of love and rapture in her outstretched arms. And while the trees behind the sepulchre are bare and withered, here the fig and olive of the garden have burst into leaf and the little birds carol on the grassy slopes. The winter is past, the rain over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing of birds is come.[2]

¶ There is a very beautiful monument by Chantrey in Lichfield Cathedral; it is called the snowdrop monument. It is of marble, and commemorates two little girls who died. The monument represents them lying asleep with their arms about one another, and in the hand of the younger there is a bunch of snowdrops—the snowdrops of promise, the snowdrops which in this instance are intended to tell of the new life that those who die wake into, and of God's summer land, where there is no death.[3]

¶ A little poem of the spring which has come down to us from the Roman Empire shows us by contrast what the world without Christ was. The first stanza tells us that "sharp winter is loosed by the breath of the spring in the west." The second gives a picture of mingled mirth and toil, as it might be seen in any village among the Sabæan Hills, and the third speaks of the joy which every one feels in such a scene. Then, like a thunderclap in a clear blue sky, the whole thing changes with a suddenness that makes the reader shudder. "Pale death comes impartially to the cot of the poor and the palace of the king. In a moment you will be in night, in the shades, and in the narrow house of Pluto." Oh! that sad pagan world, clutching feverishly at the

[1] T. Gurney, *The Living Lord*, 189.
[2] Julia Cartwright, *The Painters of Florence*, 30.
[3] J. Eames, *The Shattered Temple*, 176.

joys of wine and love because death is close at hand, always drawing nearer—death and forgetfulness! It is precisely the same note that was struck more than a thousand years afterwards by the Persian poet, Omar Khayyam:

> Ah, my Beloved, fill the Cup that clears
> To-day of past Regrets and Future Fears:
> *To-morrow*!—Why, To-morrow I may be
> Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand Years.
> A Moment's Halt—a momentary taste
> Of Being from the Well amid the Waste—
> And Lo! the phantom Caravan has reach'd
> The Nothing it set out from—Oh, make haste!

How quickly that which Horace recommended, and recommended with perfect innocence, and apparently with reason, leads to satiety and sickness of spirit. And so the age of Augustus passed into the age of Nero and Petronius.

> On that hard Pagan world disgust and secret loathing fell;
> Deep weariness and sated lust made human life a hell.

It was in that old Pagan world, with its disgust and despair, that the light of Christ shone. Jesus came into the world just about the time that Horace was writing his poems, and when He came a breath of hope shivered throughout the world. A light broke in upon human life, a possibility dawned which apparently man had never taken into account before.[1]

[1] R. F. Horton, in *The British Congregationalist*, May 18, 1911.

# In Praise of Love.

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## In Praise of Love.

**Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm:**
**For love is strong as death;**
**Jealousy is cruel as the grave:**
**The flashes thereof are flashes of fire,**
**A very flame of the Lord.**
**Many waters cannot quench love,**
**Neither can the floods drown it:**
**If a man would give all the substance of his house for love,**
**He would utterly be contemned.—Song of Songs viii. 6, 7.**

Literature furnishes no eulogy of love more splendid than this. Some of the clauses have passed into proverbs, and are often upon the lips. Such language as this has been adopted as their own by those ardent souls with whom piety is a passion, and for whom the love of God consumes all earthly emotion and desire. Here is love not simply, and not mainly, as it shows itself in our imperfect affections for each other, but as an universal and Divine principle, the motive and supreme principle of universal being; of the love which is from God, the love which *is* God and in which He dwells; the love in which if we dwell, God dwells in us and we in Him. And, taken in this high sense, the hymn is surely no unworthy precursor, no mean rival even, of St. Paul's noble and famous song in praise of charity.

¶ The vigour, one might say the rigour, of the passage distinguishes it from nearly all other poetry devoted to the praises of love. That poetry is usually soft and tender; sometimes it is feeble and sugary. And yet it must be remembered that even the classical Aphrodite could be terribly angry. There is nothing morbid or sentimental in the Shulammite's ideas. She has discovered and proved by experience that love is a mighty force, capable of heroic endurance, and able, when wronged, to avenge itself with serious effect.[1]

[1] W. F. Adeney.

## I.

### The Demand of Love.

**"Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm."**

The seal is the signet-ring which was sometimes carried by a string on the breast, and sometimes worn on the hand. Specially prized possessions in the way of jewels or ornaments used to be worn by the natives of Palestine, and perhaps are still, firmly sealed upon the person to prevent their being lost, stolen, or snatched away. Anything sealed in this way, whether an object of intrinsic value or not, was always precious in the eyes of the owner above all the other articles constituting the store of his worldly goods. It might be so regarded for old association's sake as a token of special favour conferred or of honour gained, just as we to-day might wear an armlet, a ring, a locket round the neck, or some order or decoration on the breast denoting the status or exploits of the person thus distinguished. The point of every such proceeding is, of course, that there is a close individual connexion between the life of the wearer and that which is indicated by the object worn.

1. The seal is to be set upon the heart. Begin at the heart if you would begin wisely; begin metaphysically, begin a long way from the visible, the concrete, and what is called the practical—poorest, meanest of the little heaps of dust that gather around the feet of our pilgrimage! We must have Christ in the heart, a great secret, a solemn yet joyful silence. Christ and the heart must have tender communion; they have festive times that are not marked on the calendar; they muse together, they ask questions of one another, then come more intimately near; in the soul there is a mystic wedding, without which any other wedding is an oath broken at the altar.

¶ An ancient writer said, "Christ seals us in the heart, that we may love Him; in the forehead, that we may confess Him; in the hand, that we may profess Him, and that we may practise what we profess." Over this love time and death have no power. It burns brighter when the lamp of life burns low; it breaks forth

in perfect lustre when, beyond this murky atmosphere of earth, it reaches the clear air of heaven.

2. Then set this seal upon the arm. There is a time for protest, confession, public confession of the Eternal Name; there is a ministry of symbolism; there is a way of walking which shows that the pilgrim has a sanctuary in view; there is a mysterious influence upon the attitude, the figure, the dress, the whole tone and the speech of the life. What is it? We often call it the profession of the Name of Christ. Some of us would perhaps under certain circumstances turn our clothing so that we could conceal the seal from everybody; but there is a way to be equally detested, and that is an opening and showing of the seal as if making an investment and testimonial and credential of it. There is another way, the way of true modesty, gentle but invincible love that is not ashamed of Jesus or ashamed of the Christian seal.

¶ The high priest of old had the names of all the tribes of Israel upon his breastplate, he also carried them upon his shoulders. He was a type or representative of our great High Priest, who bears our names upon His breast, the seat of His affections; the shoulders indicating His mighty power to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

My name is graven on His hands,
My name is written on His heart.
I know that while in Heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart.[1]

## II.

### The Strength of Love.

**"For love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave."**

1. The meaning of this clause is obscured by the translation. The word "jealousy" should be "love"—love regarded in its ardour and inexorable force, the love that can neither yield nor share possession of its object. The word rendered "cruel" indicates the tenacity of this ardent affection, not its cruelty; it implies, not that it will torture its object, but that it will never let it go.

[1] C. W. Lepper, *The Bridegroom and His Bride*, 237.

And the word rendered "grave" is "Sheol," the Hebrew name for that invisible underworld which so distinctly refuses to yield back the spirits which have once descended into it. So that, as we have no such synonym for the word "love" as the Hebrew use it here, we had better, to avoid repeating the same word, omit it from the second line altogether, and translate the whole distich thus:—"For love is strong as death, tenacious as Hades itself." And, obviously, what the poet intends is to set forth this master-passion of the soul as an elemental principle of being, the sole power in us which is capable of coping with death and Hades, and of overcoming them.

¶ This is a wonderful statement, when we remember that at the time it was spoken people looked upon death as practically the end of everything. The Hebrew Sheol was a dismal place, the place of all departed souls, bad and good, and without much that was hopeful or interesting in the kind of existence it allowed. In the later and higher developments of Jewish thought about the state of the so-called dead, some attempt was made to differentiate between the lot of the righteous and that of the wicked in this gloomy underworld. But it was not so at first, and it is very doubtful if it was so even at the time this text was written. It was believed that at death the Divine principle—the breath of God, as it were—was withdrawn from the human personality which, thus bereft, though it went on living in Sheol, did so without experiencing any of the former zest and joy of life; it was but a poor, shadowy, attenuated sort of existence that was left to the soul deprived of the body and of the animating spirit of God. Hence, the thought of death was always a sad one to these people, and was to them synonymous with the end of everything worth calling life so far as the individual was concerned.[1]

2. But the poet says truly that love is strong as death, tenacious as the grave. That which we love in any one is the eternal, and love once manifest can never die or even diminish, whatever may be its fate on earth through the mutability and inconstancy of our fleshly nature; the rapport once established is indestructible; the affinity must fulfil itself as surely as the rosy light of the dawn must culminate in the splendour of the sun's meridian. Did any one ever yet dare to say that they would love friend, wife, husband, sweetheart, child, for just a certain length

[1] R. J. Campbell, in *The Christian Commonwealth*, Nov. 13, 1912.

of time, and that then that love should altogether cease to be? By the exigencies of its very nature it takes for granted that it is eternal. Whenever it is true and noble—and, indeed, in proportion to its nobility and truth—it deepens and strengthens as the days go on. It implies, all the more the truer and nobler it is, the interlinking and interdependence of thought and heart and character. This is apart from all mere external circumstances; it is a phenomenon of our being—soul linked with soul; it is a spiritual fact, not a temporal one. And what has it to do with the chance of passing accidents of space and time? The stars may shine in brightness or be wrapped in gloom. Two living beings may be together with joy or separated with sadness by a vast expanse of rolling sea; the sun may be shining above them, or the storms may be out; variations of joy or sorrow may pass over them according to the blessings or trials of life—the blessings of nearness, or the trials of separation; but one thing remains untouched by circumstance, unsubdued by change; soul is bound to soul—*they love*. Here is a phenomenon above all changeful accident; here is a fact perfectly human, yet really Divine; here is an assertion, if ever there can be one, of eternity; here is a power which smiles, even if it be through tears, at the accident of death. Love, the strongest as well as the most lovely thing known to human experience, is "as strong as death"—nay, stronger; and it asserts the life beyond the grave.

¶ Death is an accident in immortality, a terrible accident, a heartbreaking accident if you like, but still an accident; and do you think that that immortal thing which has descended sun-flushed from the heart of the Creator, and illuminated and glorified and possessed the life of an immortal, can trouble to stand bandying words with a mere accident in immortality? "Love is as strong as death." Why, the wise man has spoken with a cautious restraint. We may surely say that love is stronger than death and mightier than the grave.[1]

¶ Dante says, in one of the finest passages of the *Purgatorio*, that it is love that evokes individuality and compels it to its highest and best, and in so doing draws it home to God. The whole of the *Divine Comedy* is, in fact, the allegorical story of the poet's own salvation through the upward reaching power of a great personal love. He shows this love as greater and stronger

[1] Canon Knox Little, *The Outlook of the Soul*, 333.

than both the lust of the flesh and the gates of hell, triumphing over every force that would tend to degrade or destroy it. He makes Beatrice speaks thus from heaven:

When from the flesh to spirit I ascended,
And beauty and virtue were in me increased,
I was to him less dear and less delightful;
And into ways untrue he turned his steps,
Pursuing the false images of good,
That never any promises fulfil;
Nor prayer for inspiration me availed,
By means of which in dreams and otherwise
I called him back, so little did he heed them.
So low he fell, that all appliances
For his salvation were already short,
Save showing him the people of perdition.
For this I visited the gates of death,
And unto him, who so far up has led him,
My intercessions were with weeping borne.

The thought here is, as you see, that a mighty and unquenchable human love becomes God's instrument on both sides of the grave for disgusting the soul with the filthiness of the flesh, refining its dross, and enabling it to fulfil itself in the eternal bliss.[1]

¶ In Rossetti's sweet poem, *The Blessed Damozel*, the poet pictures a maiden in paradise, with whom the ten years which have passed since she left her earthly home had scarcely seemed a single day, for time is not there what it is here. But she does not give herself up much to the enjoyment of her surroundings; her heart is filled with the memory of one she has left behind mourning her loss; and amid all the delights of the higher work she is thinking, thinking, thinking of him and planning what they will do together when he rejoins her:

She gazed and listened and then said,
Less sad of speech than mild,—
"All this is when he comes." She ceased.
The light thrilled towards her, fill'd
With angels in strong level flight.
Her eyes prayed, and she smil'd.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path
Was vague in distant spheres:

[1] R. J. Campbell, in *The Christian Commonwealth*, Nov. 13, 1912.

And then she cast her arms along
The golden barriers,
And laid her face between her hands,
And wept. (I heard her tears.)

Yes, there was room for tears, in spite of all the gladness, for she wanted him there before heaven could quite be heaven.[1]

## III.

### The Origin of Love.

**"The flashes thereof are flashes of fire, a very flame of the Lord."**

This is the only place in which the name of God appears throughout the whole poem. The "flame of the Lord" may be compared with "the voice of the Lord," which is described in Hebrew poetry as connected with the fury of the storm. The flame, therefore, would be lightning and the voice thunder.

1. It is startling to find such lofty teaching in an age when polygamy was still tolerated, and in a land where, after centuries of religion, woman was commonly regarded as man's servant and plaything, and even as a creature incapable of knowing God's law. The light shed by the Song on the heavenly origin and significance of true love amply justifies its inclusion in the record of Divine revelation, and gives it a place of pre-eminence in the poetry of the ancient and the modern world. Other elements in human passion have been analysed and embodied in many a creation of literary genius, but it is strange that the highest element of all should have been most neglected. What other thing in love can be so ennobling as the consciousness that, in that experience, God Himself is present, to bring us into actual relation with the unseen and eternal.

¶ In the poems of Sappho and Anacreon, of Catullus and Virgil, Horace and Ovid, you see at once the gulf that separates their representations of love from that of the Hebrew poem. With them love is a human passion, beautiful, happy-making, ecstatic, or tormenting, maddening, tragic, a prism that breaks up the light of human feeling into manifold colours bright and dark; with the author of the Canticle, love is the immediate presence of the

[1] R. J. Campbell.

living God in a human life raised by an inspired affection to a loftier plane of moral being. No doubt in the noble dramatic literature of Greece, for example in the *Antigone* and in *Alcestis*, the higher moral and religious aspects of human affection are recognized; but, for the most part, classic literature associates love with the gods or goddesses only in an ornamental and mythological fashion, and shows no trace of the faith and ethic so characteristic of the Song. The classic writers say, *not* with the *Shulamite*, but with the *Chorus*:

> Among all the delights how fair
> And how passing pleasant is love.

Even Shakespeare's miraculous fabric of Sonnets and Plays, resplendent with a thousand lights on human thought and feeling, gives no indication of the higher teaching of the Canticle. With the exception of Dante, the Brownings, and a few others, poets in the Christian era have seldom expressed appreciation of the immediate presence of God in all true love between man and woman, and of the lofty ethic to which this faith gives birth.[1]

2. If the heart be opened to that mightiest of mighty motives, the love of God, then there is a new force in human life, powerful enough to withstand many an onslaught of the fiercest temptation. Love, after all, is a personal matter. We never really love things; persons alone we love. We can stand and withstand; we can work and suffer, and even die, if the stimulus for action or the stimulus for endurance comes from a great love; and in the mystic arena of the spiritual life, where battles the severest and most deadly are fought out to severe conclusions, if strength be a duty, if we are to do with our might that which indeed we find to do, then, let us remember, no effort is foolish or futile which is made to throw open our understanding, our heart, or our will, to that mighty energy, "the love of God."

> Since penalties so fearful
> Thou didst to sin award,
> How can our heart be cheerful,
> How can we love Thee, Lord?
> Because Thou still art gracious,
> Lord, even in Thine ire,
> Round blissful Heaven spacious
> It is protective fire.

[1] H. Falconer, *The Maid of Shulam*, 107.

Fear makes our souls the fitter
To prize Thy love and Thee;
For if the curse be bitter
Sweet must the blessing be;
Oh, sweet to hear Thee saying,
Peace, heart, be ever still;
Oh! sweet the full obeying
Of Thine eternal will.

To Thee our heart is crying
Amid deceiving sin,
And worldly fears defying
The faith that rules within.
We from estranging error
Our love to Thee would guard;
To us the chiefest terror
Is lest we lose Thee, Lord.

## IV.

### The Unquenchableness of Love.

**"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it."**

This represents the Divine principle of love as triumphing by its inherent might over all the forces that oppose or may oppose it. Fire is the symbol of love, and therefore its antagonistic element, water, is used to set forth the powers that are hostile to love, but which must in the end be overcome by it. You can extinguish flame with water, if only you can pour on a sufficient quantity; but this flame of love no amount of coldness or opposition will cool in the least degree. Let Satan and his legions do their very utmost to lessen the intensity of this heavenly flame, their labour is vain. They only prepare for themselves a bitter disappointment. Or let the floods of human vice and human antagonism rise as they may, they can never rise as high as this heavenly flame. The finite can never overmaster the Infinite. The love of God to men is a sacred principle, an integral part of the Divine nature. There is nothing outside God to be compared in potency with what is within Him. As the creature can never be a match for the Creator, so no kind of opposition can ever

injure or diminish the eternal love of God. Just as nothing on earth or in hell can diminish God's power or tarnish His righteousness, so also nothing can lessen or dim the fervent flame of His eternal pity. "Many waters cannot quench love"; yea, love turns all human hatred into fresh coals to feed the flame.

¶ Do we not read in the *Pilgrim's Progress* how the enemy was seeking to extinguish the fire by pouring on pails of water; it became a matter of astonishment how the fire continued to burn, even with greater vehemence. But the Interpreter explained the secret, seeing that from behind the scene there was another hand pouring oil upon the flame. So it is with the Bride of Christ. There is much to discourage her. There is much to cool her ardour. There are many who would drown her love if they could, but, thanks be unto God, it lives on. She survives all the opposition of the enemy, and she will yet be more than conqueror through Him that loved her.[1]

## V.

### The Unpurchasable Sanctity of Love.

**"If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, he would utterly be contemned."**

1. The thought of this final distich is the sacredness of love. It is not a commodity to be bought or sold in the market; no money can purchase an affection so priceless, because so holy and Divine.

One reading of this passage is, "If a man would give all the substance of his house instead of love, he would be utterly contemned." The Lord does not want our gold. The gold and the silver are His. He wants ourselves; and if He gets us, our two mites or our two millions will soon go into His treasury. There appears to be a great lack of means for missionaries and others at the present time. The question is often asked, "Why is it so?" Various answers are given, but the true answer is the lack of that consuming love which will place our all at the feet of Him who sold all that He had that He might win us to Himself. If we give our substance, vainly thinking the Lord will accept of us because of our offering, it is a gross mistake. He wants not ours, but us.

[1] C. W. Lepper, *The Bridegroom and His Bride*, 240.

What God requires is that we first take His gift, His unspeakable gift, and then lay ourselves without reserve at the feet that once bled for us. If we do, all else will follow. "First they gave their own selves to the Lord." This is the primary offering, but if truly laid upon the altar it includes all the rest.

¶ Love is by nature outgoing, enlarging, quickening. The sign of its genuine arrival is seen in one's longing to share with others an outreaching in sympathy and joy. Those who fail to move outward and forward into completer life are inevitably drawn in the opposite direction. But the one who responds, moving outward with the new wave of life, finds the possibilities of existence developing without limit. This quickening power of love, delighting us by its noble surprises, is the greatest wonder of the heart.[1]

2. If love is to be purchased, it is love and not money that must be paid for it; "the substance of a man's house" is no equivalent for the priceless treasure. Gratitude and service may be bought, but love is beyond the value of jewels and of gold. We are taken into another region than that of market value and of merchandise.

¶ John Woolman's gift was love,—a charity of which it does not enter into the natural heart of man to conceive, and of which the more ordinary experiences, even of renewed nature, give but a faint shadow. Every now and then, in the world's history, we meet with such men, the kings and priests of Humanity, on whose heads this precious ointment has been so poured forth that it has run down to the skirts of their clothing, and extended over the whole of the visible creation; men who have entered, like Francis of Assisi, into the secret of that deep amity with God and with His creatures which makes man to be in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field to be at peace with him. In this pure, universal charity there is nothing fitful or intermittent, nothing that comes and goes in showers and gleams and sunbursts. Its springs are deep and constant, its rising is like that of a mighty river, its very overflow calm and steady, leaving life and fertility behind it.[2]

¶ There may be many things that pertain to a Christian man, and yet all those things are contained in this one thing, that is love; he lappeth up all things in love. Our whole duty is contained in these words, "Love together." Therefore, St. Paul saith,

[1] H. W. Dresser, *Human Efficiency.* [2] Dora Greenwell.

"He that loveth another fulfilleth the law"; so it appeareth that all things are contained in this word "love." This love is a precious thing: our Saviour saith, "By this all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye shall have love one to another." So that He maketh love His cognizance, His badge, His livery. Like as every lord, most commonly, giveth a certain livery to his servants, whereby they may be known that they pertain unto him; and so we say, "Yonder is this lord's servant," because he weareth his livery; so our Saviour, which is Lord above all lords, would have His servants to be known by their liveries and badge, which badge is love. Whosoever now is endued with love and charity is His servant; him we may call Christ's servant, for love is the token whereby you shall know such a servant that pertaineth to Christ; so that charity may be called the very livery of Christ; he that hath charity is Christ's servant.[1]

[1] Bishop Hugh Latimer, *Sermons.*

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